Queensland Baptists

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP FOUNDATIONS

Passion Six:

Team

_____

from grace to sway

THE SEVEN PASSIONS OF BIBLICAL LEADERS

study 1

Introduction to TEAM for Christian Influencers

So far, we have mainly focused on influencing individuals and groups. As Christian leaders, we impact a range of people who are influenced by our biblical Operating System (GRACE, LOVE, HEART) and some of our Apps (CROP and FAITH). Our attention has been focused on the relationship between Christians of influence and the individuals and groups they are influencing and leading.

But as our influence grows, we start leading teams as well as individuals and groups. This requires an extra dimension of leadership. In a team, members work together and influence each other. Leading a team adds further complications and opportunities to leadership and calls for additional skills. It's these new leadership approaches and competencies that we will focus on in the App of TEAM.

Let me illustrate the difference between a group and a team. Although God's call for me at 25 to be a youth pastor was unexpected, I did enter the role with considerable experience in youth leadership. I knew how to organise and develop a youth ministry and therefore set about building a "group" to help me. I chose capable young adults who had good character and strong potential and we formed a youth council together. I gave each of them jobs to do and held them accountable (in a nice way), but there was never any doubt that I was the one leading and responsible for the youth ministry. As everyone played their part under my direction, the youth work grew. This youth leadership council functioned effectively as a working group.

After a paradigm-changing experience while leading a youth camp (which I will describe later), I completely altered my approach. We scrapped the council and formed a youth support team which was made up of some young adults but also many parents. We prayed together for the young people, we worked on FAITH vision together, we planned our programs together and we shared the leadership of the ministry according to the context and our gifts. I didn't understand the concept at the time, but we formed a "team" that pursued a shared vision, took responsibility together, exercised our complementary gifts and held each other accountable.

A working group can be an effective way of achieving goals. With the five passions we have explored so far, you should already have the competencies to lead a group. But in this chapter, we are focusing on the skills and approaches that are necessary for building and leading real TEAM.

The differences between working groups and teams

Before we consider the theology that lies behind TEAM, it's important to clarify exactly what we mean by a real team as opposed to a working group. These two ways of working together are not mutually exclusive but lie at two ends of a continuum. Any band of people working together will lie somewhere on the continuum and will have some characteristics of a real team and some characteristics of a working group.
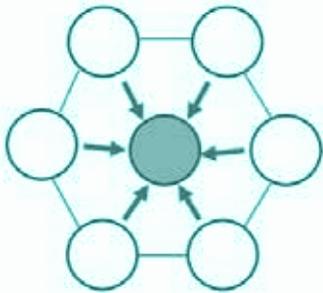
A **working group** has a leader to whom each member of the group reports. This leader is responsible for the direction and functioning of the group. The group members communicate together to facilitate their effective operation, but primarily they work independently on the tasks and goals that have been assigned to them by the leader and may even find themselves competing for limited resources (e.g. personnel, space, profile, finances) with other group members. Effective delegation and accountability through the leader are keys to the healthy operation of this model.
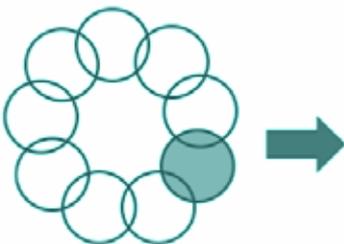
A **real team** also has a leader, but the main role of the leader is to facilitate the healthy communication and functioning of the team as it pursues its specific purpose/vision together. The values and FAITH visions are owned by every member of the team and rely on the whole team for their achievement. Team members are therefore accountable to each other for results and need to work interdependently for the vision to be achieved. Although there is still an ultimate leader, leadership of the team can be shared depending on the nature of the task and the skills of the team members.

Depending on the gifts and style of the leader, the vision from God that needs to be achieved and the available personnel, there will be a sweet spot on the spectrum between working group and real team for a group/team to function. But the question is, does God have a preference?
(I hope you've enjoyed the shorter reading today. Tomorrow's will be considerably longer. Sorry.)

> **JOURNAL ACTIVITY 6.1**
>
> 1. What do you see as the main differences between a working group and a real team?
> 2. Think of a team in which you are presently involved or have been involved. Where would you place it on the working group/real team spectrum?

The biblical foundation of TEAM

God is team

God is a Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in which each person has a role but always works in relationship with and dependence on the others. From the first chapter of Scripture this unity and interdependence is made clear. Creation was a team effort.

Then God said, **"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness."** (Gen. 1:26)

The teamwork of our Trinity God runs throughout Scripture. I will just consider one New Testament passage as an example. In John 14:16-26, Jesus is responding to the disciples' fear that when he leaves they will be left alone. He tells them about the coming ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives, but he makes it very clear that while the Spirit has a distinct role, he does not work in isolation, but as part of a team together with the Father and the Son. In fact, this passage expresses so much overlap and togetherness in their ministry that it is somewhat difficult to distinguish exactly who does what and who goes where. See if you can work it out in these excerpts:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth... I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you... On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you... Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them... "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

The ideal of functioning in interdependent teams is not something that God just designed for the people he created but is more foundational than that. Team is inherent to the very being and nature of God. God is team: always has been, always will be. Team flows from the nature of God.

We have been designed to work in body/team

As human beings made in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26), it is no surprise that God has designed us to live in interdependent community. The earliest sign of this was God's recognition of Adam's need for a "helper."

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him"… But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. (Gen. 2:18-24)

The one flesh nature of the marriage relationship mirrors the community at the heart of the Trinity.

When God chose a nation (Israel) to represent him to the world, he gave his people laws that not only governed their relationship with him but also their relationships with each other. They were to live in a loving and just community that protected and supported each member no matter what their social standing or contribution to society. The Israelites were to exemplify what God was like, not only in their moral behaviour but also in their gracious community. God wanted the world to know that loving God inevitably produced a caring community of people that worked together for good and justice.

This theme of model community (or team) continues into the ministry of Jesus. The followers who lived in his new kingdom would not only live radically obedient lives but would serve together in a radically loving community, modelled on the relationship in the Trinity. This is what Jesus prays for just before his death:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23)

Paul takes up this idea for the church. He doesn't use the word team, but his equivalent is the concept of "body." The church is like a body. It is made up of a wide range of parts that work together under the direction of the head (Christ) to do God's work. No member of the church can function effectively alone. We need the diversity and gifts and mutuality of the body to serve God well. We're supposed to do life and ministry together.

Here are a few verses that reinforce this concept:
Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each

member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. (Rom. 12:4-6)

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. (1 Cor. 12:12)

In fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (1 Cor. 12:18-20)

From him [Christ] 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)

Some of the ramifications of Paul's "body" metaphor include:
1. People have different gifts and different contributions. This is organised by God.
2. Each person has a vital part to play in the growth and ministry of the church. We need everyone.
3. The church is meant to be bound together by loving relationships.
4. The church is most effective when everyone (all parts) works productively together under God's direction.

While this is true of the universal church, it is also true of the local church, and it is also true of ministry teams within the local church. The theology of "body" is meant to apply at all levels of the functioning church.

So let me rearrange the four statements above to refer to teams of Christians serving together:
1. Members of the team have different gifts and different contributions. This is organised by God.
2. Each person has a vital part to play in the growth and ministry of the team.
3. The team is bound together by loving relationships.
4. The team is most effective when everyone works productively together.

From beginning to end, the Bible calls for God's people to live and serve in team. This reflects the true nature of God to the world, provides the loving security and support we need, and is the best way to ensure that all the God-given gifts of the body contribute effectively.

Relating and serving in team is not a matter of preference or personality or style or structure. TEAM is a principle that is deeply embedded in the nature of God, in the nature of Israel, and in the nature of the church. God calls us to minister in team.

Responsibility for team

Who is responsible to ensure that the team actually does what it is called to do, that the "body parts" do in fact minister productively together? Let's look at what Pauls says:

> **Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 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. 4:15-16)

Everyone has a part in building healthy relationships. There are actions like "speaking the truth in love" that will contribute towards the effective growth and ministry of the team together. Every member has to contribute towards the relational health of the team. We also have to all do our job. If every member of the team has a contribution, then only as "each part does its work" will the most productive ministry occur.

But ultimately, it's the "Head" that is responsible for the team. Paul says that "from him" the body is enabled to grow in love and become all that God intends it to be. The ultimate head of the body is Christ and it is only through Christ and the work of his Spirit that the team reaches its full potential. We need Jesus desperately to forge us into teams that he can powerfully use.

> **We need Jesus desperately to forge us into teams that he can powerfully use.**

But there is a third support for the growth of the body mentioned in this passage. It's the supporting ligaments (or "ligaments and sinews" Col. 2:19). The whole body is "joined and held together" by these ligaments. But what is it that holds the body together? Paul may have been thinking of supports like the truth of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, but he certainly saw leadership as an important ligament.

We know that because in Ephesians Paul emphasises the vital role of leaders in the growth of the body. In discussing the functioning of the body, he says:

> **So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.** (Eph. 4:11-13)

In this passage, it's the equipping function of leaders that is emphasised, but Scriptures make clear that leaders who act under Christ to govern/manage/shepherd the body are accountable to him for the health and functioning of the body. God invests significant authority and responsibility in his leaders. For example, Hebrews says, **"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men that must give an account"** (Heb. 13:17). So it would

appear that leaders are part of the "ligaments" that hold the body together and enable it to work effectively.

Because leaders are responsible to Christ for the body/team, they have a vital role to play in ensuring that the body functions as it should - as the body of Christ, building itself up in love as each person contributes, and making a kingdom difference. Leaders facilitate, with and through Christ, the forging of the church (or team) into a functioning body that grows as each part contributes.

While these passages are referring to leaders of the church, in a similar way, the leader of a team (under Christ) has an important role to play in forming the team, developing the team, bringing unity to the team, and assisting the team to function effectively as a team so that each member contributes usefully.

Biblical leaders and team

But did biblical leaders actually forge teams? Well it's difficult to tell how effective some leaders were in developing and utilising teams. We simply don't have enough information. A few of them (e.g. Samson) were certainly lone rangers. But there is

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evidence that some of the best biblical leaders were committed to developing teams. Let me give a few brief examples.

1. Jesus. Jesus had many disciples, but he chose to focus on a team of 12 that he equipped to lead the early church. He called them, invested in them, spent time with them, taught them, showed them, challenged them and gave them tasks to gain ministry experience. While they were slow learners, after three years with Jesus (and with the help of the Holy Spirit), they were ready to lead the church. It is significant that Jesus left a team, not a person, to steer his fledgling church.

2. Paul. It appears that Paul learned to work in team from his mentor Barnabas. Whenever he headed off on his missions, he always took a team along. Romans 16 gives us a sample of the huge number of people that Paul worked with. Whenever he appointed elders for the churches he planted, he always selected a team (Tit. 1:5), not an individual.

3. Nehemiah. When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem and saw the divided state of the returnees, he set out on a major project (rebuilding the walls) that would focus the nation and get the leaders working together on a common vision. He was incredibly effective in dealing with all the threats to the project and problems in the team, so the team stayed united and on task. Nehemiah was a superb leader who understood the importance and power of team.

4. David. David must have been a skilful and inspiring team leader. While banished by Saul, he managed to forge 400 misfits ("all those who were in distress or in debt or discontented" 1 Sam. 22:2) into a strong fighting force. In 2 Sam. 23, there is a list of David's 33 or so mighty men, the core of his team. These guys were so loyal that when he was pining after water from a certain well, on

their own initiative they broke through enemy lines just to get it for him. His team had it challenges (e.g. Joab his 2IC at times was not always a team player), but David forged them into a team that through God's empowerment took the nation to incredible heights.

5. Moses. Moses was a slow starter when it came to team. He was reluctant to take on the leadership of Israel at 80, and when he did, he pretty well took all the responsibility on himself. When his father-in-law, Jethro, visited, he saw Moses' problem and asked the question, "Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you?" (Ex. 18:14). Jethro advised Moses to appoint a team of judges "that will make your load lighter because they will share it with you" (Ex. 18:22) and Moses did exactly what Jethro advised. "Moses chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens" (Ex. 18:25). In other words, he established a team-based structure with the responsibility shared.

So you can see that the Bible is strong on working as a team. **God is a team and he designs and calls his people to work in team together.** Christ is the head and the power behind all teams, but every member shares responsibility for the effective functioning of the team. The Bible also makes it clear that leaders have an important role to play in the growth and functioning of team and this is exemplified by many of the effective biblical leaders.

JOURNAL ACTIVITY 6.2

1. Are you convinced about the biblical emphasis on team? Why or why not?
2. If team is so important, why is it sometimes so difficult to achieve?
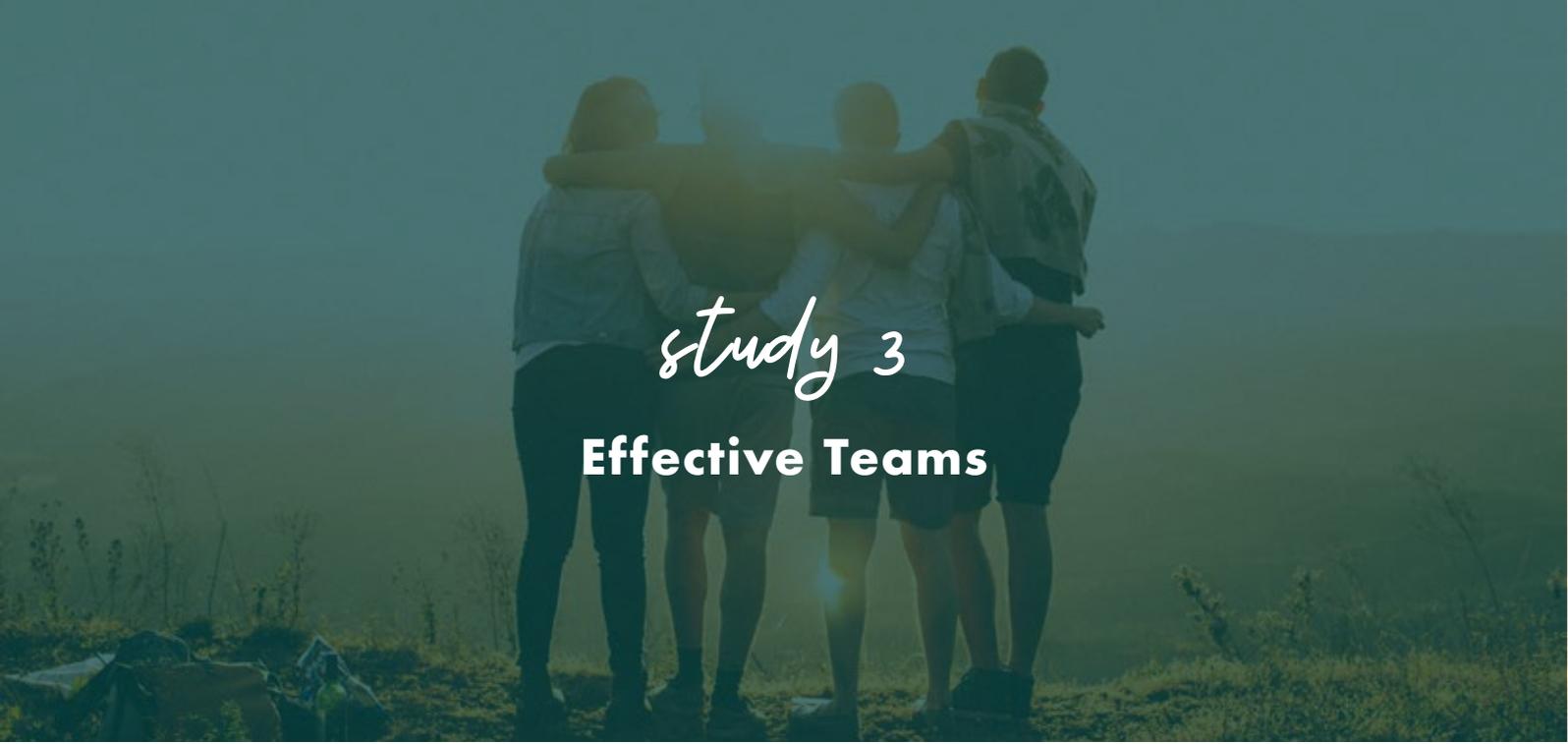
study 3

Effective Teams

Some biblical signs of an effective body/TEAM

What does a relationally healthy team look like? A significant amount of practical New Testament teaching deals with the way God's people should relate and work together as they live and serve as a body/team/community. There is not space here to deal with every biblical sign of a healthy team but let me offer some samples to whet your appetite. While I recognise that the biblical guidance below has wider implications, it certainly applies to a team that is functioning in God's way.

1. **Loving each of the team members.** "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). "For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another" (1 John 3:11).

> **We need Jesus desperately to forge us into teams that he can powerfully use.**

2. **Laying down our lives for other team members.** "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters" (1 John 3:16).

3. **Using our gifts for the benefit of the team and its ministry.** "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7).

4. **Carrying the burdens of the other team members.** "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). "… so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it" (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

5. **Rejoicing when others on the team are honoured.** "… if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

6. **Submitting to the leaders of the team.** "Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you" (Heb. 13:17).

7. **Praying for the other team members.** "I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better" (Eph. 1:16-17).

8. **Being honest with others on the team.** "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

9. **Forgiving and serving others on the team.** "Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else" (1 Thess. 5:15)

10. **Dealing with the sins of each other.** "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

11. **Accepting each other despite our differences.** "The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them" (Rom. 14:3).

12. **Doing our job without comparing ourselves with others on the team.** "Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load" (Gal. 6:4-5).

TEAM empowerment

The result of an effectively functioning "body" is that the team achieves greater kingdom impact than team members could ever achieve as individuals. Because we have been designed to function effectively as we work together, using the whole range of team gifts together produces a stronger impact and greater results. There is a ministry empowerment that comes from being part of a team working well together.

This means that Christian leaders need to be team players who are interested in the effectiveness and success of the team more than their own success or the success of individuals in their team. Leaders empower their followers to greater fruitfulness than they would ever have as isolated individuals. By building the team into a cohesive ministry unit (with God's help), the team members together have a greater impact for God; a greater impact on their world.

God uses individuals, but the most effective service comes though the body working together.

There is a ministry empowerment that comes from being part of a team working well together.

When you get a team of people who truly love each other, who are honest and real with each other, who share a common passion for a God-given FAITH vision, who hold each other accountable, and who work together for God and the team, not their own agendas, then great things happen.

TEAM is a biblical passion. God wants things done in real teams wherever possible.

My own conversion to TEAM

Let me describe my major conversion to team and the consequences of this conversion before offering further advice on team building qualities and skills.

As long as I can remember, I have been involved in working with others. But as my influence grew, I found myself mainly taking responsibility for ministries and encouraging others to work with me towards my vision. I'm pretty strong with relationships and I had a reasonable leadership Operating System (GRACE, LOVE, HEART) in place, so I don't think that followers felt that they were being used. But it was clear that I was the leader and consequently I had the authority and was the one who took the major responsibility.

As I shared at the start of this module, when I accepted God's call to Kenmore Baptist as youth pastor, I enlisted a number of other leaders (mostly young adults) to help. We formed an effective working group. I did a lot of organising and delegating, and the other members of the youth council pulled their weight well. God worked in his grace through our ministry, and many young people became Christians including a number of former drug addicts. It was an exciting time.

We used to take all the young people away for an annual camp on a long weekend. We camped out in 15 or so large tents with separate tents for guys and girls of course. I organised and led the camp but had a lot of help from other adults and young adults to set up and operate tent city and to lead the young people.

One night I was on patrol at about 1.00am, making sure that everyone was behaving themselves. As I was prowling around the tents, I had a feeling that there was a girl in one of the guy's tents. It happened to be the tent where many of the ex-drug addicts were sleeping with their panel vans (cars you could sleep in) all backed up to the flaps of the tent.

I found myself in a quandary. If I burst into the tent looking for a girl and there was none there, I would show these guys that I didn't trust them and lose credibility with them. If, on the other hand, I ignored my suspicions and there really was a girl in the tent, I would be shirking my responsibilities

and would be allowing a dangerous precedent. So I walked up and down the dirt track by myself for an hour praying and agonising over what I should do.

I never did go into that tent. But I made an important decision as I paced the path in the middle of that fateful night. I vowed that I would never do this by myself again. From this point on, I would always share the responsibility with others and work with them as a team, not just as a leader with followers. I didn't want to have to make these calls alone anymore. I needed to be part of a ministry team in which everyone was committed and everyone shared the vision and responsibility.

So I came back from camp with a new way of thinking and we established a leadership support team. This was a team of adults (many of them parents) and young adults who took responsibility together for the youth work. We prayed for the young people weekly. We sought God's FAITH vision and strategized the ministry together. We shared the leadership of our 20 youth small groups. And we all took responsibility for the 1.00am camp patrols. We would eventually camp out with 250 young people and 20 or so members of our support team.

The ministry of the support team was so effective that when God called me to my next church, the very large youth ministry at Kenmore continued without a hitch with no youth pastor, under the leadership of the support team. No momentum was lost at all. This is the power of team.

Since that significant night, I have always aimed at working in real team. Not just providing vision and direction for followers around me as an "heroic" leader would but sharing both the authority and the responsibility with a team so that we are truly on mission together, genuinely caring for each other and praying together, and all contributing with our gifts to the shared vision. **As we have already seen, this is how God works and how he calls us to work.**

JOURNAL ACTIVITY 6.3

1. Reflect on a team you are part of or have been part of. Give the team a rating (out of 7) as to how well it fulfilled each of the 12 biblical signs of an effective team outlined at the start of this study. (This is a high standard so don't be concerned about some low results.)
2. Have you ever been part of a team whose ministry impact was far greater than the strengths of the individual members? How did it happen?

study 4
Building TEAM

Some basic team building skills

There are numerous team-building skills that assist the effective and productive functioning of a real team. Many of these skills take a life-time to develop, so you have time to work on them. In this study, I will deal with some of the more foundational leadership qualities/skills that TEAM requires.

1. **Commitment to team.** You will not be able to build team if you are not committed to working in team. I know this sounds obvious, but many leaders say they want to build team, but actually they really want to run a working group with the team members enthusiastically supporting their directions and plans. There are certainly times when a working group is the best option, especially when you are working with an inexperienced group. But real team involves sharing responsibility together and providing direction together. If you can't really trust others, then you will not build real team.

2. **Giving up absolute control.** I guess this a subset of commitment to team, but it is vital, so I want to reinforce it. Working in team requires the leader to give up absolute control of the agenda. This calls for openness and vulnerability. It involves recognising that you don't have all the answers. You have to really believe that the team is best able to set directions and make decisions together. This means that on occasions you will not get your way. The team will choose a course that is contrary to your wishes. In other words, you will lose. If you are a wise and influential leader, this will not happen all the time. But it will occur, and it will be an indication of the health and strength of the team. A team that always does what the official leader wants is not really a true team. A team leader has to lose absolute control.

3. **Setting a compelling direction.** However, the leader still needs to set the direction for the team's work. This direction can be imposed by the hierarchy or discerned after wide consultation, but in the end, the direction of the team is the responsibility of the leader. Teams don't work well if team members have different ideas of what they should be doing. Teams need to be aligned around direction and values. A clear, challenging, compelling direction will motivate the

team and will enable them to use all their gifts and resources productively to pursue the vision. It also provides a yardstick of how well the team is doing. Ultimately, team is not about good relationships (though these will be vital), but about the achievement of a FAITH vision together.

4. **Building shared values.** A team is held together by three things. The first is their commitment to team, the second is their compelling vision, and the third is their shared values. While there will be a wide diversity of personalities, approaches and values in a healthy team, members need to share the common values that knit them together. It is the leader's role to discern, express and constantly reinforce these shared values. This is particularly important when a team is being established and when new members (who may have different values) join the team.

Other leadership skills for working effectively in teams

If you are committed to team and are willing to be vulnerable and give up absolute control while setting direction and building shared values, you are well on your way to leading an effective team. But there are many other practices that contribute towards a strong team. Here is a sample of qualities of empowering team leaders:

1. **Communication.** Empowering leaders build strong two-way communication. They listen carefully to what team members are saying and they clearly present their own values and ideas.

2. **Motivation and encouragement.** Empowering leaders are encouragers of their team. They understand what will encourage and motivate team members and work hard at maintaining a positive, uplifting culture in which people feel valued.

3. **Conflict management.** Empowering leaders are ready to face and work through team conflict in a healthy way. Conflict is inevitable in a team. In fact, a team doesn't become really effective without working through internal conflict. Conflict resolution skills are important for empowering leaders.

4. **Ability to work with different team members.** Empowering leaders understand that people have different personalities and backgrounds and therefore will respond well to different motivations and environments. A huge danger of leadership is thinking that everyone believes and responds like you. This is not the case. Team members need to be handled differently.

5. **Managing change.** Empowering leaders learn how to bring people through significant change. Very few people enjoy major change and many will resist it. But there are ways to bring team members effectively through change together. These can be learned.

6. **Delegation of authority.** Empowering leaders understand that responsibility and authority belong together. They show trust in their team members and are ready to delegate authority as team members grow in ability to handle responsibility.

God's ideal is a healthy, unified team in which everyone pulls their weight, all members appreciate their own gifts and the gifts of other team members, and all are committed to the values and goals of the team.

7. **Supervision and evaluation.** Empowering leaders retain ultimate responsibility for the functioning of the team and hold team members accountable to complete their assignments, as well as encouraging teams members to hold each other accountable. They provide support, advice and feedback and regularly review the team's progress.

8. **Planning and organisation.** Empowering leaders have enough management skills to ensure that the team operates smoothly and projects are organised and achieved. Some aspects of organisation can be delegated, but leader still needs to understand and support the process.

9. **Handling criticism.** Empowering leaders are not paralysed by criticism. They understand that leaders will always face criticism (some of it very personal) and develop ways of handling it so that it does not impact their functioning and the functioning of the team.

10. **Effective decision making.** Empowering leaders make wise decisions by listening carefully to different perspectives, praying and looking for God's guidance, going to trusted counsellors for advice, and working through the implications. They are not afraid of taking responsibility for the call when needed.

11. **Coaching and mentoring.** Empowering leaders develop skills in coaching and mentoring their team members.

God's ideal is a healthy, unified team in which everyone pulls their weight, all members appreciate their own gifts and the gifts of other team members, and all are committed to the values and goals of the team. But this is difficult to achieve, no matter how skilled you are as a team leader. Just look at the churches in the New Testament. There were not too many that looked like the team I have described above. Even Jesus' team didn't look like this too often.

I don't want to set the bar too high. You are fortunate if you are part of such an empowering team once or twice in a lifetime. But as a Christian leader, this is the biblical goal that you are constantly aiming towards as you lead groups of people.

Steps in building TEAM

As this course is a biblical introduction to Christian leadership, there is no need to explore the building of TEAM in detail. Many authors, both Christian and secular, have written helpful books and articles on this issue that you can access easily. But let me just give you a taste.

One very popular and insightful management author on the functioning of a real team is Patrick Lencioni. He has written numerous books, but probably his most impacting tome was written way back in 2002 and entitled, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team. It describes a hierarchy of five obstacles that prevent a working group from becoming a real team.

To give you a taste of the values in this book, I will briefly summarise them. But rather than discussing dysfunctions of groups, I will turn them into five positive sequential steps that are necessary to turn a group of people working together into a real team.

1. **Vulnerable trust.** The first step is to encourage vulnerability and honesty so that team members can comfortably acknowledge both the strengths of other members and their own weaknesses, failures, short-comings and need for assistance. In most working groups, people compete for recognition and work to protect their own reputation. This creates barriers and suspicion and diverts a lot of energy from productive collaboration. Trust involves being confident that team members want the best for each other and that there is no need to protect yourself. The team leader must lead the way in being open and vulnerable, and readily admitting weaknesses. Without trust, real team will never emerge.

2. **Healthy conflict.** Conflict is often seen as a danger to team health. It appears that conflict will stress relationships and produce dysfunction, but the opposite is actually the case. Once trust has been established, healthy conflict allows issues to surface and be dealt with, rather than to fester away, inhibiting productive relationships. Everyone can express their views and know that they have been heard. Valuing conflict means that the team can actually work through issues on which they disagree rather than ignoring them. Once team members experience healthy conflict and its productive outcomes, they will begin to embrace conflict with enthusiasm and expectation. But this good conflict must focus on concepts and ideas and not on personalities, and it needs to be preceded by trust.

> **Once the decision is made, every member of a real team commits confidently and unwaveringly to the final decision.**

3. **Unwavering commitment.** Once everyone has had the opportunity to express their views (through robust debate and healthy conflict) and the collective wisdom of the team has been truly tapped, a clear decision needs to be made. Generally, this decision should not be postponed (unless further information is necessary) because deferment produces paralysis in the team and wasted revisitation of the issue. Despite the fact that there will seldom be perfect understanding of the issues or complete consensus, every member of a real team must then commit confidently and unwaveringly to the final decision of the team, knowing that their perspective has been considered and the team together has spoken. Once the decision is made, everyone on the team must be totally committed. Trust and conflict are necessary precedents to this kind of wholehearted commitment that is vital for the functioning of a real team.

4. **Unapologetic accountability.** As team members commit together to values and decisions, they then need to be willing to call their peers on performance or behaviours that might hurt the team or prevent it from achieving its vision successfully. In a working group, these concerns are relayed to the team leader or, even worse, only talked about behind members' backs. But in a real team, each member takes responsibility for the health and success of the team and helps deal directly with any dysfunction. This type of accountability requires healthy friendships that are bolstered by honesty and openness. Peer accountability is the best way to maintain high standards of functioning in a team and reduce the need for performance management.

5. **Collective results.** Finally, the measure of success of a real team is found in its collective results, not its individual achievements. It's a vision of success together that drives the functioning of the team. In truth, when it comes to the crunch, most leaders (and team members) will choose individual glory over team success. This is deadly to team. The team needs to be completely intolerant of individually focused behaviour, and deeply committed to collective team achievements. Real teams are not working together to survive or maintain or personally benefit members. They are completely focused on meaningful collective results. If these results are not clear or not rewarded, the team will splinter and pursue individual agendas.

I realise there is a lot to comprehend in this small section. As I said a few paragraphs ago, this is just a taste. You probably won't be ready to apply all these ideas, but I hope you feel a sense of excitement about the possibility of building a real team.

The growth stages of a team

Research has shown that real teams tend to develop in predictable ways. There is often a four-stage growth process that involves:
1. **Forming** - establishing the team and experiencing the potential of working together.
2. **Storming** - realising that the other team members actually have flaws and inadequacies and working through the differences and frustrations that ensue.
3. **Norming** - re-establishing strong working relationships based on acceptance of each other (with the flaws) and mutual appreciation for each other.
4. **Performing** - experiencing empowerment as the team together achieves successes well beyond the capabilities of individuals.

JOURNAL ACTIVITY 6.4

1. There has been a lot to comprehend in this study. What is one helpful idea you have learned that may be helpful for a team in which you are involved?
2. What strengths would you bring to the leadership of a real team.

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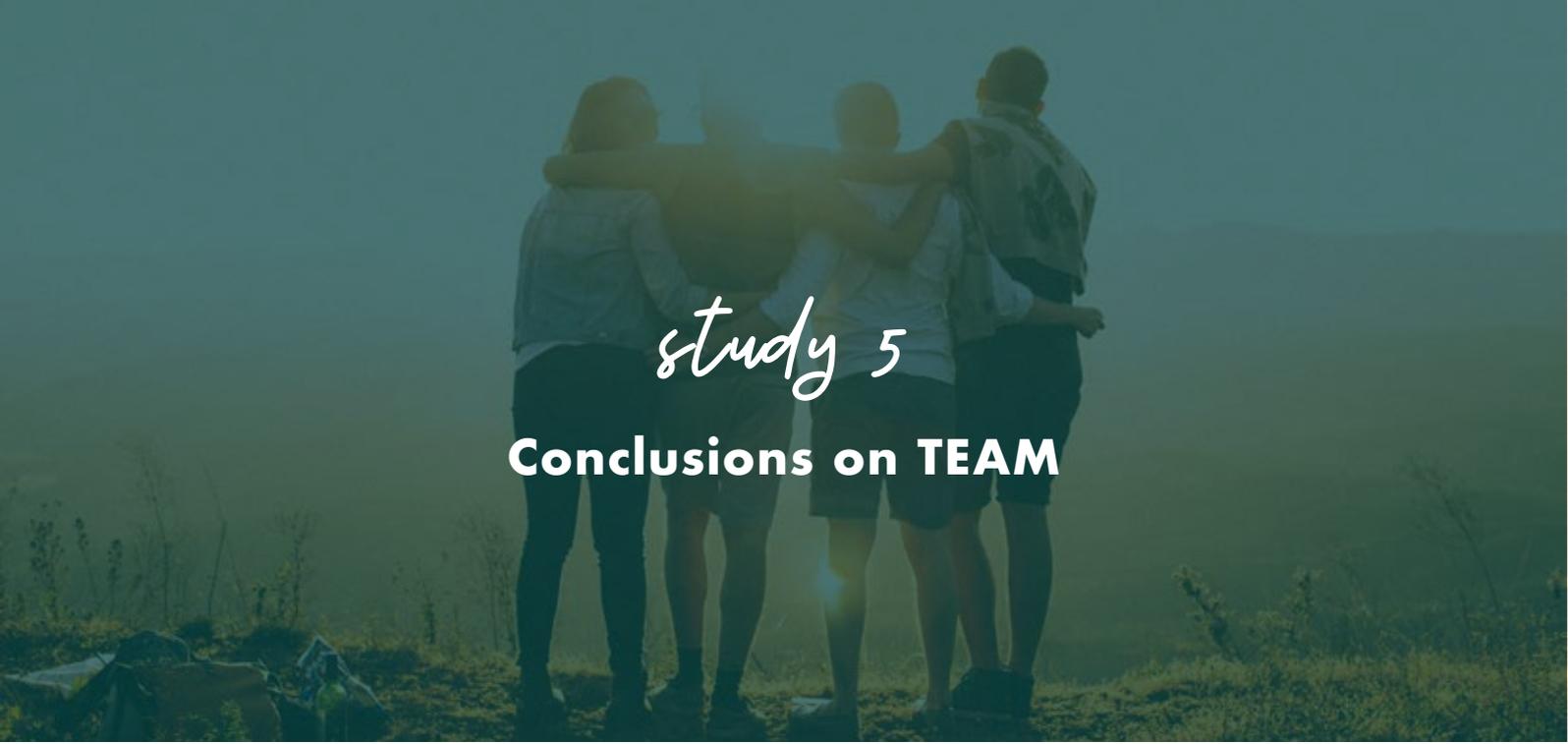
study 5

Conclusions on TEAM

How TEAM serves followers

We have seen that TEAM is one of the Apps that grows our influence and makes our kingdom impact wider. Not every Christian of influence will be a strong team builder because TEAM requires some high-level leadership skills that not every Christian possesses. That's okay. But if we can help build a group of people into a real team, our influence grows in two ways. First, more is achieved than team members could ever achieve by themselves or by working in a group and this builds commitment. Second, people are keener to follow us because being part of a team provides them with both empowerment and enjoyment. Let me expand on these.

1. Empowerment

One blessing of being a Christian is that you don't have to do life by yourself. You become part of a body of diverse people where every member has a significant contribution. The body is tied together by its common relationship (child of God and indwelt by the Holy Spirit), common direction (to love God and love others) and common values (the products of the gospel of grace as revealed in Scripture).

> **Most people long to be part of the movement of God through an effective team.**

We don't always see the body of Christ at its best. Sometimes, the relationships are not strong, there is little leadership, and we don't see the power of God at work through us much at all. **But when we experience TEAM as God intended** and become part of a group of Christians who love each other, support each other, use their complementary gifts, share values and vision, and hold each other accountable, then **we see that God can use us in ways that are far beyond anything we could hope to achieve ourselves.** This is empowerment and it is hugely encouraging and motivating.

So if you can help develop TEAM (under the direction of Jesus), you will find people wanting to follow. Most people long to be part of the movement of God through an effective TEAM.

2. Enjoyment

Another spin-off for those who follow you in forging a real team is the fact that it really is fun. The stages of getting to a functioning team are not always fun, especially the "storming" stage. It takes a lot of hard work on everyone's part. But when you get there, it really is exciting.

You get to serve together with real friends that you respect with all their faults. You get to see God using your team in ways that you didn't think possible. You find that the team has your back when things go wrong. You are able to be really honest and open with the team and grow through the relationships. You find that you are needed and valued. This not only makes life and ministry more significant for team members, but it also makes it more enjoyable. TEAM is an aspect of the "life to the full" that Jesus promised.

Conclusion

TEAM is the most challenging of the Apps we have considered so far. Many of us may not have the abilities/calling to lead people into team. That's fine. Our influence will be more one on one. We will join teams rather than lead them. If that describes you, please be a great team member.

But even when we do have the ability and calling, all our insecurities and weaknesses will work against the forging of a strong team. We will struggle to make ourselves vulnerable, to give away our authority, to trust others, to confront conflict, to share the praise, to keep on consulting, and to accept the differences. It's so much easier to use our power to get others to fall into line and to avoid all the give and take that TEAM requires. Not many Christian leaders actually build strong teams.

> **TEAM is the most challenging of the Apps we have considered, but it really is worth it.**

But surely this is our goal. The Bible advocates no other way for Christians leaders to influence. We're supposed to do it in TEAM. So if we are called, let's develop these commitments and skills needed for this passion, and give TEAM our best effort.

My personal reflection

For much of my leadership life, I've considered TEAM as one of my greatest strengths. After God's revelation to me as a youth pastor at Kenmore, I have been committed to building teams wherever I have been leading. When I became a solo pastor at Bracken Ridge, one of my first moves was to invite a retired pastor in the congregation to join me on the team. I love working in team.

At times I led teams that came pretty close to being a real team. Our leadership support team at

Kenmore became a very effective and enjoyable team over six years. In my fourteen years as senior pastor at Bracken Ridge with a developing and changing staff team, we had times of great closeness and strong empowerment. And in my sixteen years as principal of Malyon Theological College, we experienced the sort of team described in this chapter for probably three or four years.

Up until recently, I would have said that I build excellent teams when I have the right people and opportunity; that I am good at TEAM. But this has turned out to not be the complete truth. As I came to the end of my leadership of the Malyon team, I completed a 360 degree review with 20 of my staff, colleagues, friends, bosses and peers providing extensive feedback on my leadership. While the review showed up many leadership strengths, it revealed clearly that those who work with me don't always see me as a great collaborator. I tend to have strong ideas that I push intensely and don't always allow a lot of room for the ideas of others. No wonder the teams I led didn't always flourish despite my passion for TEAM. It was partly a problem with my leadership.

But God isn't finished with me yet. I am still learning and changing. I am still growing in TEAM. Here is my purpose at the moment: **"I want to foster environments where people grow smarter, more confident and more capable, and where true collective wisdom emerges."**

JOURNAL ACTIVITY 6.5

Checkpoint 6: TEAM

TOTAL: ☐

Please rate each statement on the following scale:

5 - Strongly Agree;

4 - Agree;

3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree;

2 - Disagree;

1 - Strongly Disagree

TOTAL the scores for each quality and put the total in the box. This gives a score out of 25. A score below 20 indicates significant room for growth.

1. I am most alive and effective when I'm working together with a team. I need team. ☐

2. I genuinely want to share my leadership with a team and have developed skills in this. ☐

3. I and those I lead see ourselves as a strong team with the same values and goals. ☐

4. In our team, we work through decisions and differences in a healthy, honest manner. ☐

5. We have had some significant successes credited to our team ☐

Describe briefly what you have learned about TEAM as essential for Christian leaders. Reflect on your self-assessment (above) and discuss the steps you are taking (or will take) to develop TEAM.

Discussion Questions: Team

Choose the most appropriate questions.

1. What issues have the readings and journaling raised for you? Share your answers, thoughts and questions.

2. What struck you most as you worked through these studies on TEAM?

3. Share your response to Journal Activity 6.5.

4. In the light of these studies, how is one of your present teams going? If you are not in a team at the moment, reflect on a team you have been part of in the past.

5. Which of the team building skills described in this module are your strengths, which are your areas of growth at the moment, and which do you think will take quite some time to develop?

6. How will you develop these skills? How do leaders build the skills required for TEAM?

7. From your experience, what stops Christian leaders building effective teams?

8. What experience have you had with the different stages of team life described in Study 4? Are these stages mandatory to grow an empowered team?

9. Share some common values that you would seek to infuse in a team you are leading or a team that you may lead in the future.

10. How do you show that you value team? What are you presently doing to build and strengthen a team in which you are involved?

Case Studies: Team

Choose the most relevant case studies to discuss.

1. Amy has a couple of difficult people on the music team that she leads. They turn up late for practices, criticise the song choices, and don't listen to musical directions. The trouble is that they are very good musicians and greatly improve the quality of the music. Amy has tried to speak to them about these issues, but they are older than her, and quickly dismiss anything she says. Amy has been working on building team by establishing team core values such as punctuality at practices. But other members of the team are becoming disgruntled because of the two dissidents. What can Amy do? Is she the right person to lead this team?

2. Jack is leading a small group of tradies for his building company. He has just been appointed to this position and doesn't really know what he is doing. None of his team are Christians and two are older than him. The guys reluctantly take his direction if he comes on strong, but this only builds resentment. He wants to turn this group into an effective team but has no idea where to start. What would you do in his situation?

3. James runs a really effective small group. He leads the studies, organises the worship and provides supper. Everyone usually has a great time and people say that they are learning heaps. James is very gifted and generous. But Nerilee, the pastor for small groups, is concerned that everything in the group revolves around James. She's tried to bring it up a few times, but he just says that everything is going really well and that the group is very satisfied (which they are). Do you see any major problem here? Would you try to push any further with James? If so, how would you help him?

4. Anna's new children's team is going through a tough time. They have different personalities and approaches and are becoming frustrated with each other. This came to a head at their last planning meeting. Tempers flared when one team member pushed for giving an appeal for the kids to follow Jesus every week and another member saw this as manipulating the kids. They've only been working together for six months, but the cracks are beginning to show and Anna doesn't know what to do. As a friend, what would you suggest to Anna?

5. You are part of a group that has some very talented people, but Dave, the team leader, seems to have no idea how to build it into a real team. He discourages discussion, makes all the calls himself and will reveal nothing of his real feelings. Dave likes you, but he is 20 years older and does not handle any hint of criticism well. You are very disappointed because the group has such great potential. Would you try to do anything? If so, what?