



Workplace Group Resources

Growing as Disciples in Today's Workplace: **Relating Well in Organisations**

LEADER'S GUIDE

A seven-session Bible study

Paul Valler

Contents

Session 1	p. 1
Session 2	p. 2
Session 3	p. 3
Session 4	p. 4
Session 5	p. 5
Session 6	p. 6
Session 7	p. 7

Introduction

Relating Well in Organisations is a set of seven sessions about improving workplace relationships. They form the second study in the LICC series *Growing Disciples in Today's Workplace*. Each session is designed to be 30 minutes for Christian workplace groups, with some follow up material for personal reflection.

Each session comprises a session guide, two audio recordings for the scene setter and the teaching, scripts for those segments if your group would prefer to read them rather than listen, and a handout to be given to each group participant. A key learning for reflection is summarised at the end. One person should act as the group leader for every session and facilitate the questions, discussion, and prayer.

Whilst these sessions do quote from the Bible in support of the narrative, they do not offer an expository approach but draw more broadly on general principles in Scripture relating to the theme of relationships. They also make extensive use of the five dimensions of relational proximity developed by Michael Schluter (published in *The R Factor*) applied to relationships in the workplace. References are made to books and TED talks on workplace relationships.

About the author

Paul Valler is Chair of LICC's Board of Trustees, a Work Forum Associate at LICC, life coach, and regular speaker on workplace ministry. Formerly the Finance and Human Resources Director of Hewlett-Packard Ltd., his mission is to inspire people to make the right choices as they navigate through life. Paul is the author of *Get a Life* (IVP) and *Using Measurement Well* (Grove Leadership Series).

SESSION 1 A Fresh Pair of Eyes

Scene Setter (5 mins)

Listen to the introductory talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 8.

Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection (13 mins)

- What are the top three relationships that matter most in your workplace?
In your opinion are these relationships getting closer, just static, or drifting apart?
- How much are these workplace relationships characterized by genuine, mutual benevolent interest and goodwill?
- What do you think would be most likely to improve the quality and closeness of your key relationships at work?
What needs to change and what first step could you take to bring about that change?

Teaching (7 mins)

Listen to the talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 9.

Five Dimensions of Relational Proximity (2 mins)

Pick a key workplace relationship you have and score it on each of these five criteria on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is high.

- 1) Communication (directedness/openness)
- 2) Story (continuity over time)
- 3) Purpose (common purpose)
- 4) Information (number of different contexts)
- 5) Power (parity and mutual respect/influence)

Key Learnings for Reflection

- Relationships are a key theme of our faith.
- Relationship closeness/proximity is an important way to look at the workplace.
- Relational proximity can be analysed and improved.

Group Response/Reflections (3 mins)

Take time to reflect on what you've listened to and discussed. Give people an opportunity to share their thoughts on what's struck them most.

Homework

Try rating more key workplace relationships using the five dimensions and then consider how to improve them.

Further study

The Relational Manager, Michael Schluter and David John Lee (Lion Books)

The R Factor, Michael Schluter (Hodder & Stoughton Religious)

SESSION 2 Authenticity

Scene Setter (5 mins)

Listen to the introductory talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 12.

Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection (15 mins)

- When has being authentic and vulnerable in the workplace really paid off? When did it cause a problem? Why?
- How open are you in your most important relationships in the workplace? What aspects of yourself are you tempted to mask or hide? Why?
- Can you suggest some guidelines that would help to ensure that what we share about ourselves with others is both appropriate and wise?

Teaching (5 mins)

Listen to the talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 13.

Group Response/Reflections (3 mins)

Take time to reflect on what you've listened to and discussed. Give people an opportunity to share their thoughts on what's struck them most.

Key Learnings for Reflection

Vulnerability and appropriate disclosure are required for genuine and deep relationships. This requires both courage and sensitivity.

For further study

[The Power of Vulnerability,](#)

Dr Brene Brown (TED talk)

SESSION 3 Resilience

Scene Setter (5 mins)

Listen to the introductory talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 15.

Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection (15 mins)

- How much do you fear failure at work?
What kind of behaviour does that create?
- Have you experienced rejection because of failure in the workplace?
How have you dealt with it?
- How do you typically deal with other people's failures?

Teaching (5 mins)

Listen to the talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 16.

Group Response/Reflections (3 mins)

Take time to reflect on what you've listened to and discussed. Give people an opportunity to share their thoughts on what's struck them most.

Key Learnings for Reflection

Trusting in our forgiveness and acceptance by God enables us to face the fear of failure and remain calmer under attack. Showing the same forgiveness towards others makes our relationships more resilient.

For further study

A Resilient Life, Gordon MacDonald
(Nelson Books)

SESSION 4 Using Power Well

Scene Setter (5 mins)

Listen to the introductory talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 18.

Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection (15 mins)

- What are some of the main forms of power in your organisation?
Are they generally used well?
- When you influence others are you inclined to use strong power or weak power?
How assertive are you with those in power above you when the situation calls for it?
- What, in your view, are some of the criteria for using power well in an organisation?

Teaching (5 mins)

Listen to the talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 19.

Group Response/Reflections (3 mins)

Take time to reflect on what you've listened to and discussed. Give people an opportunity to share their thoughts on what's struck them most.

Key Learnings for Reflection

There are many forms of power, but influence through close relationship is often the most powerful. Using power well is using our influence for the empowering, wellbeing, and blessing of others.

For further study

Understanding and Using Power, Roger Preece
(Grove Books Leadership Series)

The Undefended Leader Trilogy, Simon Walker
(Piquant Editions)

SESSION 5 Relating to Power

Scene Setter (5 mins)

Listen to the introductory talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 21.

Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection (15 mins)

- How clearly defined is your job?
Are the job responsibilities and the performance expectations clearly agreed?
- How much do you understand how your work contributes to the overall purpose of the organisation?
- How much of an effort do you make to understand the pressures both your boss and the people who work for you are under?

Teaching (5 mins)

Listen to the talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 22.

Group Response/Reflections (3 mins)

Take time to reflect on what you've listened to and discussed. Give people an opportunity to share their thoughts on what's struck them most.

Key Learnings for Reflection

Clarity and accountability, mutual understanding, tailored and regular communication, and wisely appropriate submission and assertiveness are helpful in relating to power.

For further study

Understanding and Using Power, Roger Preece
(Grove Books Leadership Series)

The Undefended Leader Trilogy, Simon Walker
(Piquant Editions)

SESSION 6 **Serving in Teams**

Scene Setter (5 mins)

Listen to the introductory talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 24.

Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection (15 mins)

- What have been your positive and negative experiences of working in teams? What are some of the best and worst examples of teamwork you have encountered? What made the difference?
- How easy is it for you to accept the imperfection of others, including the leader, in your team?
- Does love 'cut the mustard' at work? In a team do you think there is any tension between loving people as Jesus loved and team members producing the best results both individually and as a group?

Teaching (5 mins)

Listen to the talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 25.

Group Response/Reflections (3 mins)

Take time to reflect on what you've listened to and discussed. Give people an opportunity to share their thoughts on what's struck them most.

Key Learnings for Reflection

Can you identify any relationship improvements since this module began? What do you think lies behind those improvements?

For further study

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team,
Patrick Lencioni

[Why it's time to forget the pecking order at work](#), Margaret Heffernan (TED Talk)

SESSION 7 **Leading Teams**

Scene Setter (5 mins)

Listen to the introductory talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 27.

Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection (15 mins)

- Who is your best example of a team leader in your workplace? Why?
- How do you feel about leading others who are quite unlike yourself?
- What kind of leadership behaviour is most often missing in your team?
What kind of leadership behaviour is most often missing from you?

Teaching (5 mins)

Listen to the talk [here](#) or read it out from the script on page 28.

Group Response/Reflections (3 mins)

Take time to reflect on what you've listened to and discussed. Give people an opportunity to share their thoughts on what's struck them most.

Key Learnings for Reflection

Servant leadership in the context of strong relationships is the best way to lead.

Various kinds of leadership interventions are needed in healthy teams, both to envision and inspire others, and to correct poor behaviour.

For further study

Relational Leadership, Walter C Wright
(Send the Light)

Servant Leadership, Robert Greenleaf
(Paulist Press)

likeateam.com

Session Scripts

SESSION 1 A Fresh Pair of Eyes

Scene Setter

Welcome to this second module on *Growing as Disciples in Today's Workplace*. This module is about relating well in organizations. These sessions are designed to fit into a 30-minute slot for Christian network groups. In each session there will be a short introduction, a series of questions for you to consider and discuss, a short teaching element, and then some suggested follow-up material for those who are interested.

In this first session we will be looking at the way thinking about things from a relational perspective can change everything.

Theological Basis

A key difference between Christianity and other religions lies in its understanding of the centrality of relationships. This is essential to Christian theology. God experienced relationship in the Trinity before creation. His righteousness includes right relationships and he makes covenants, which means long-lasting, faithful relationships. And the forgiveness that flows from the cross of Christ is about healing the relational rupture between God and humankind. As we are made in the image of God our human identity is derived from relationships, which are necessary for our sense of fulfilment and contentment.

Because relationships are important to God, the quality of our relationship with him and with other people matters and is reflected in how Jesus summed up the law and the prophets in what is generally referred to as The Great Commandment: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:30-31). Love is basically about relationship.

A Relational Lens at Work

This relational understanding is the basis of an alternative view of everything we experience in life. Jesus looked at the world through a relational lens and he trained his disciples to practise close relationships. 'A new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another' (John 13:34). Even the Old Testament laws governing the ownership and distribution of property, the financial system, the criminal justice system, and the structure of government all come out of a relational way of thinking.

Looking at our work and our workplaces through a relational lens can significantly change the way we approach our work. Having a fresh pair of eyes to see the workplace differently means we see it not only as a place where results are achieved, but also a place where relationships are formed and develop.

In some businesses and institutions the quality of relationships is essentially ignored in favour of statistical and financial results. Yet relationships matter in achieving results. One of the keys to sustainable profitability for a business, according to research, is the extent to which people trust their managers. Low trust correlates with low motivation, and high trust with higher motivation – which leads to better performance.

Gallup surveys have shown that one of the three most important indicators of job satisfaction is whether someone in the organisation actually cares about the employee as a person. 70% of people who leave their jobs are, in reality, leaving their managers, and staff turnover costs money in recruitment, training, and lost productivity. Relationships do make a significant difference to the bottom line.

For this module you are invited to pick a few key workplace relationships, analyse them, and work on improving them using some relationship tools.

Teaching

Michael Schluter has identified five factors that tend to predict or lead to what he calls 'relational proximity' or 'closeness'. He identified these five factors from his study of relational behaviour and principles in the Bible. If we think of a healthy relationship as being represented by white light, we can think of these five factors as being like five

component colours split out by a prism. They are components of close relationships.

1. Communication

Communication is more than the transfer of information. It is nuanced by direct contact, by responsiveness, and by openness.

'Being there' in person is better than sending emails and is usually more effective. Face-to-face communication better enables emphasis, inspiration, and emotional intensity, which helps to explain why some encounters have an impact out of all proportion to the amount of time spent on them. We are more likely to be emotionally and mentally present when we are physically present. In any oral communication, words can make up as little as 7% of the message. The rest is voice tone, facial expression, gesture, and body language.

If we are unable to be physically present, then Skype is probably the next best thing, because we can both see and hear the other person. If we can't Skype, then a telephone call is better than an email, because we can hear the person's tone and voice inflexion.

2. Story

Continuity of relationship over time matters. Shared experiences create a bond and give us greater understanding of each other and hopefully more trust. When you know the history of your relationship it builds momentum over time. Old school friends

feel they can pick up a relationship with little introduction or preamble, and knowing the history of someone often enables closer rapport. If we are beginning a relationship, finding a common story or a common contact we can both relate to is a helpful way of creating rapport.

One bank applied this principle in training their call centre employees to learn and note down the call history of customers. Then, when a customer phones, even though they may speak to a different person they do not have to explain the situation and background all over again.

3. Purpose

Common purpose is powerful in bringing people together. People and teams motivated by a clear common cause tend to be more productive and satisfied. When there are shared goals there tend to be fewer tensions, and those that do occur get resolved more quickly.

An alarming number of workers don't really know what's expected of them or how or why what they do fits in with the goals of the organisation. People need to know how their work contributes to the realisation of the main mission, and to be convinced that the mission is indeed worthwhile. When we share goals it often diminishes personality tensions or helps to resolve them more quickly.

4. Information

People who see one another in more than one kind of context – what Michael Schluter calls a multiplexity of contexts – are more likely to develop and maintain deeper relationships. At its best, corporate entertaining is a legitimate attempt to develop trust by widening the scope of the relationship. Pursuing a shared interest outside of work, for example, means that people can say what they think, or express a level of doubt or lack of understanding that might be difficult in a meeting with ten others hanging on every syllable, expecting them to be incisive and decisive.

Knowing something about the outside interests and home life of work colleagues enables us to better understand them, and sometimes why they may make decisions, for example about when to go home!

5. Power

Finally: power, or to be more accurate, the balance of power. In any organisational hierarchy there are often differences in 'positional power'. But healthy relationships still have mutual respect and participation, so influence flows both ways. In contrast, feeling intimidated or put down by others damages relationships.

When relationships are unbalanced, because one party ignores or intimidates the other, both motivation and results often suffer. Unfair rewards can create a power

imbalance that can poison relationships. Pay differentials can drive dissatisfaction, because they can sometimes create a sense of injustice. Workers usually don't strike just because they want more money, but because they feel they are not getting a fair share of the money that is available.

Now pick one of your key workplace relationships and ask yourself whether any of these five dimensions helps you understand why the relationship feels either close or perhaps more remote. Take two minutes now and on a 1-5 scale (where 5 is high), try quickly scoring this relationship on each of these five dimensions.

What does your initial analysis show you about your perception of the relationship? And, on the basis of the lowest score, is there anything you could do to improve it?

Of course, what would be most helpful would be for the other party to do the same analysis, so you can both compare the perceptions. Sometimes that may be an appropriate thing to do, if both parties are genuinely interested in developing the relationship. Yet even if the other person is not aware of our perceptions, by changing our behaviours in response to our own analysis, we can often influence the relationship for the better.

SESSION 2 Authenticity

Scene Setter

Welcome to the second session in this module about relating well in organisations, which forms part of the series on *Growing as Disciples in Today's Workplace*. Last time we looked at seeing the workplace through fresh eyes – through a relational lens. We unpacked a simple model for looking at relational health, based on five dimensions: communication, story, purpose, information, and influence. You were invited to identify some important relationships in your workplace and discern how they rated on these five dimensions, with the objective of improving those relationships. In this session we tackle the issue of authenticity.

Authenticity is the practice of being yourself and is key to truly healthy relationships.

In workplace organisations there can be many pressures to conform to the culture, which lead to being tempted to present what we think is 'an acceptable face'. In a performance culture, for example, many people feel they have to project the image of a high achiever in order to be accepted. Or they may feel the need to emulate other kinds of behaviours in front of their boss or colleagues. If people talk in euphemisms and use language that cloaks their real agendas, then suspicion develops and relationships become awkward or stilted. A lot of needless energy can be wasted in trying to get past

the fog of uncertainty. In contrast, authentic people give themselves permission to be real and are not driven by a fear of rejection.

Jesus was always authentic and direct with people. His relationship with Peter is a great example of authenticity. Peter had some of the warmest affirmation from Jesus ever given to anyone – 'Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven' (Matthew 16:17) – and yet he also experienced moments of direct confrontation by Jesus – 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me' (John 13:8).

The Power of Vulnerability in Relationship

Many of us imagine that if we are authentic we will be vulnerable and we fear rejection. Yet being vulnerable is actually a key condition of healthy relationships. The willingness to be open (and therefore vulnerable) is a powerful way to deepen relationships, because it helps to create real connection. People who behave as if they are invulnerable often bully or blame other people as a way of offloading their own sense of insecurity.

Of course, sharing something about ourselves does have risk and we need to be wise and appropriate about what we share. For example, it is unwise to be vulnerable with a bully, because they are likely to take advantage of it – we need to be resilient with

bullies. But, in general, a gradual process of personal disclosure ends up resulting in a better and more authentic relationship.

Looking back at the five dimensions of relational health we can see that vulnerability correlates with three of them. Firstly, a personal disclosure often disarms power in the relationship. Secondly, it adds information, and thirdly it contributes to the shared story.

Vulnerability is a pathway to empathy. Jesus wept after the death of Lazarus and that immediately drew an empathetic response from the Jews: 'See how he loved him!' (John 11:36).

Dr Brene Brown, a research professor in this area says, 'The willingness to be vulnerable depends on whether we believe we are still worthy of love and belonging. The thing that keeps us out of connection is the fear that we're not worthy of connection'.

Vulnerability typically involves admitting to some kind of weakness and we find that hard. Yet vulnerability is not the same thing as weakness, or a lack of assertiveness. It is possible to be both assertive and vulnerable. To let ourselves be seen and be honest is a sign of courage.

Teaching

The Johari Window

A couple of psychologists called Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham developed a tool called the Johari window, which helps us

understand how sharing something about ourselves affects our relationships. The Johari window is a two-dimensional grid with ourselves on one axis and other people on the other axis. Each side of the grid is divided into what is known and what is unknown.

Things that are known to us and known to others are in a shared, or public, domain. The things known to us but not known by others are private. Some things are known about us by others, but not by us. And finally, there are some things that are unknown to us and to everyone else – they are known only to God.

The more about us that is in the shared domain usually means there is more trust in our relationships, because people feel they know more about who we really are.

There are two ways to move more information about us into the shared domain and they both involve disclosure. The first form of disclosure is when other people tell us something about ourselves that we did not know. Jesus did this with Peter. When he first met Peter he said, 'You are Simon son of John, you will be called Peter' (John 1:42). Jesus saw in him a quality and a potential of which Peter was unaware. By speaking it out Jesus moved it into the public domain.

The second form of disclosure is when we choose to make a disclosure about ourselves. The story of the miraculous catch of fish is an example of this in the interaction between Jesus and Peter. By arranging such a massive catch, Jesus disclosed something about his divinity. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell

at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' (Luke 5:8). He was awed by the greatness of Jesus and he chose to disclose his own sense of inadequacy and shame.

Making disclosures can feel uncomfortable and risky, but as more information is shared it often strengthens the relationship. Peter half expected rejection based on his disclosure: 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' In fact the opposite happened: Jesus affirmed him and said, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people' (Luke 5:10).

Appropriate Disclosure Principles

Sometimes our need for connection and intimacy gets in the way of our better judgment and we open ourselves only to be rejected. We need God's wisdom about what is appropriate to share and in what context. There is no magic formula to making a disclosure work out right every time. Jesus experienced rejection in the synagogue at Nazareth as described in Luke 4. By reading an extract from Isaiah 61 he identified himself as the fulfilment of messianic prophecy to the people he had grown up with – people he knew – and he was rejected. That must have hurt.

Later in the gospels we see Jesus did not always choose the same level of sharing with everyone and he often seemed to wait until there was some desire on the part of the other person before he revealed more

of himself. He looked for something in the other person that wanted and needed his disclosure. His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, documented in John 4, models this.

So as we consider whether a disclosure is appropriate, it is wise to think about:

- 1. The strength of the existing relationship**
- 2. Sufficient trust**
- 3. A reason for disclosure which is other-centred not self-centred**

Rejection will happen sometimes, even if our motives are entirely good. But as Christians we do not need to be controlled by a fear of rejection. If we have a deep sense of the love and grace of Christ in our heart then we will have a secure sense of self-worth and will be free from having to please others. If God has accepted us, and we know that his opinion of us is the one that really matters, then we don't need to worry if others reject us. 'If God is for us, who can be against us?'

(Romans 8:31)

SESSION 3 Resilience

Scene Setter

Welcome to the third session in this module about relating well in organisations, which forms part of the series on *Growing Disciples in Today's Workplace*. Last time we looked at being authentic in our relationships at work. In this session we tackle the issue of resilience in relationships – the ability to bounce back from difficulties and to maintain a positive commitment in the face of challenges.

Obviously the strength of any relationship depends on the mutual commitment of two people and so the resilience of a relationship is not entirely dependent on what one person can do. Nevertheless, each of us can work on having a more resilient character in order to better enable resilient relationships.

Two key character issues that affect resilience in the workplace are our attitude towards failure and our response to various kinds of pressure.

Fear of Failure and the Grace of God

One of our deepest fears is being rejected, and the possibility of failure triggers the fear of rejection. Fear of failure can undermine trust and confidence and actual failure can undermine a relationship. So it is important to consider how we deal with any sense of fear of failure or shame in ourselves, or in others. As John Ortberg says, 'Failure is not an event, but rather a judgment about an event'.

Peter failed on several occasions and it is helpful to see how Jesus dealt with that. Perhaps Peter's most devastating failure was his denial of Jesus in the courtyard of the high priest. When the cock crowed and the Lord looked directly at him, Peter was emotionally crippled by that shame (Luke 22:60-62). Even after the resurrection, he shrank back to the life he had before he met Jesus (he went fishing), perhaps because he thought it was the end of his relationship with Jesus. Yet Jesus appeared again and enabled another miraculous catch of fish, reminding Peter of his original call.

The conversation between Jesus and Peter in John 21, where Jesus makes it clear he still accepts Peter, is one of the most wonderful examples of the way the grace of God enables recovery and resilience. Near the fire where Jesus cooked breakfast – perhaps reminiscent of the fire in the courtyard where Peter failed – through the emotional pain of the memory of failure, Peter expressed his love for Jesus again. Jesus immediately made it clear that Peter was not only forgiven, but that he was still committed to him, and Jesus went on to give him a new commission. Then Peter knew he was fully known and still loved. His shame was wiped out. This renewing experience made him a humbler and more resilient leader, more accepting of himself and of others.

As Christians we also know that our failures are forgiven – or at least we do intellectually. But often that knowledge has not become deeply anchored in our emotional core. A fear of failure and a vague sense of shame can still inhibit us and give us a sense of inferiority. When we really grasp God's unconditional love and full forgiveness, we experience freedom to accept ourselves as we are. The games we play to conceal parts of ourselves from others are rendered irrelevant by the gospel. We are truly free to be who we are.

Equally, when others in our workplace fail, we have an opportunity to choose to be accepting of them as God is accepting of us, and gracious as God is gracious. Our response to what may be deemed failure can help to promote a culture of grace, in which respect for the person is untarnished and their story continues. Of course, failure does have consequences – it can damage trust and confidence, and may cause financial loss – we are not in denial about that. The consequences of failure may mean having to change some job responsibilities in the short term. Yet people do not need to be made to feel personally judged, threatened, or devalued by failure. For the Christian, failure does not have to destroy self-esteem, because Christ took all our failures for us on the cross. His death and resurrection mean we are released from the requirement to be perfect and released from shame. This makes us more resilient people.

Teaching

Jesus Models Resilience under Pressure

Jesus was often pressurised by other people, sometimes in groups and sometimes individually. Examples of that are in four events that are documented in Luke 4. The events are the temptation of Christ, the rejection at Nazareth, Jesus driving out an impure spirit in Capernaum, and finally, healing many people. Each of these four episodes reveal different aspects of resilience being modelled by him.

The temptations of Christ began with an attempt to induce doubt about identity: 'If you are the son of God...!' The intent was to get him to do something extraordinary to prove who he was. Despite being under enormous personal pressure Jesus refused to do that. He would not do things just to validate himself. And that is relevant in our relationships at work. How much of what we do at work is an attempt to validate ourselves or be rated at a certain level? How much is our behaviour an attempt to boost our self-worth or status? How secure are we in our true identity in Christ?

Secondly in Luke 4, at Nazareth, amongst the people he had grown up with, Jesus declared his call and mission and was rejected by them (Luke 4). That must have hurt and could easily have led to cynicism or bitterness. Yet he did not let the hurt he experienced control him or prevent him from fulfilling his work. Jesus showed self-control and he simply moved on – his story continued. Resilience in

relationships means forgiving others where we have been hurt so we can be free from bitterness. It also means forgiving ourselves where we have failed, because God has forgiven us. As Gordon MacDonald says, 'resilient people run free of the weight of the past'. In our relationships at work there will occasionally be times when we make a proposal, or give a certain perspective, which is rejected. How will we respond?

Thirdly in Luke 4, in Capernaum, Jesus experiences a sudden and verbally violent attack. An evil spirit tries to intimidate and undermine him – to destroy his credibility – yet he calmly and clearly exercises his authority over it. Resilience sometimes needs directness and assertiveness and that is something not often associated with Christianity, even though Christ was often direct and assertive. Being direct and assertive flows from having confidence in our identity in Christ and confidence in God rather than ourselves. This kind of confidence does not need a raised voice or an aggressive attitude. It simply means standing firm when we are tempted about our personal boundaries or attacked in the area of our calling.

Occasionally we may encounter a verbally vicious person with a destructive agenda. How prepared and practiced are we at keeping our cool, and responding with calmness and clarity to be assertive in an emotionally difficult situation?

Finally, after healing many people, Jesus was

pressured to stay on in that area. Sticking around was an attractive offer: there was much good work to be done. But Jesus had clarity about his purpose – the mission God had given him – and that enabled him to make the better choice to 'preach to the other towns also'. Keeping a big picture view of our work, and understanding how it fits into the wider purpose, is a helpful basis for keeping us from being side-tracked into activities that dilute or distract us from what is most important. Like Jesus, sometimes we will need to be assertive in resisting calls to do things that distract us from the main thing. A clear sense of purpose also helps us to keep going in the face of difficulty, pain, or failure, and to resist the comparative ease of repeating what we have done in the past instead of staying true to our call.

Organisational life has many pressures where resilience is needed. The performance culture of work tempts us to make our work an idol and find a false identity in what we do. When our colleagues and bosses reject our proposals this can leave us feeling demotivated and unproductive. Other people may sometimes try to destroy our credibility or undermine us. And there are also temptations to pander to the wishes of other people that may distract us from what we are called to do.

Resilience in workplace relationships includes being secure in who we are in Christ, being able to forgive and move on from rejection by others, responding calmly and assertively to attacks, and sticking to the work that we know we are called to do.

SESSION 4 Using Power Well

Scene Setter

Welcome to the fourth session in this module about relating well in organisations, which forms part of the series on *Growing Disciples in Today's Workplace*. The last two sessions considered the challenges of being authentic and resilient in our relationships. In the next two sessions we tackle the issue of relationships within an organisational hierarchy of power and authority.

Power (the extent to which there is the ability to influence or control) is one of Michael Schluter's five lenses of relational proximity. So before looking at the impact of power on relationships, it is important to recognise that there are various kinds of power.

Types of power

Power is not something that has only one form. Authority and influence are derived from all kinds of factors. The power that comes from a position within a hierarchy is only one kind of power. However, 'positional power and authority' can be challenged with other kinds of power, such as power from knowledge, competency, and expertise, or from the credibility of track record and experience, or even from an attractive personality. Power can also come from the trust and loyalty that has developed within a relationship, which is often more influential

than any positional power.

Simon Walker in *The Undefended Leadership* trilogy talks about 'strong power' and 'weak power'. However, the terms 'strong' and 'weak' do not relate to potency, because so called 'weak power' can still be very powerful indeed.

Walker describes strong power as bringing to bear an influence that directly affects the situation. Weak power, on the other hand, is more about attracting cooperation. It is a more indirect kind of influence, responding to the situation in a way that draws on the energy of others through respect, encouragement and affirmation.

There is no obvious ethical preference for strong or weak power; it all depends on the situation. For example, strong power used to intervene and pull someone off a bridge who was contemplating suicide would be a very good use of strong power. But in contrast, abusing someone would be an example of a bad use of strong power. A good use of weak power was demonstrated by Ghandi in his 240 mile protest walk against the taxes on salt when India was a colony of Britain. But weak power can also be used abusively, for example to undermine a meeting in an underhand way or to humiliate its leader. The motivation and integrity of the person using power is therefore key to whether that use of power is good.

Although Jesus was a servant leader, he used both strong and weak power. When he was washing the disciples' feet he had to confront Peter with strong power to tell him that unless Peter allowed him to wash his feet he would have no part in him. The miracles of Jesus were demonstrations of strong power – intervening to bring wellness and life, feeding people and helping to create an environment in which people flourish. The ultimate example of Jesus using weak power would be his submission to death on the cross.

We tend to associate positional power in a hierarchy with strong power. But a person who empowers their subordinates and encourages and affirms them may well accomplish goals more effectively through the use of weak power.

Teaching

How Power Damages Relationships

Power can distort or damage relationships in several ways.

1. Ambition for Advancement

The lure of positional power can be traced back to when Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan to 'be like God' (Genesis 3:5) and it has always been a feature of humanity since the fall. James and John asked Jesus if they could sit on his right and on his left, and even used their mother to lobby for this privilege (Matthew 20:20-21).

The selfish greed for more power makes promotion within a hierarchy feel attractive.

Ambition often fuels a driven-ness and perfectionism that puts achievements above relationships. Overly ambitious people can become so focused on achievements that they devalue other people and treat them like commodities. Paul describes his own behaviour as being like that before he came to know Christ (Philippians 3:4-6).

The underlying desire for advancement can also lead some people towards sycophantic, 'people pleasing' behaviours in an attempt to ingratiate themselves with the powerful.

This kind of behaviour becomes repulsive because it is patently false.

2. Oppressive Control

Many people have emotional scars because of the way power has been used against them. In the Bible Elijah experiencing this at the hands of Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-3). Today bully-bosses abound in the workplace and their management methods damage not only their relationships, but also the wellbeing of the whole group.

If we find ourselves in a powerful position, we should beware the temptation to use our power for personal advantage or to put others down. Oppressive power often results in rebellion, illustrated in Jehoiakim's rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:1). People sometimes rebel in organisations that are led by a bully by deliberately causing problems or leaving in a destructive way.

3. Corruption

Many of the kings in the history of Israel were corrupt. Kings with power were tempted by the opportunity to change the rules on morality. Examples are Ahab and Jezebel's false accusation of Naboth to get his land (1 Kings 21:1-19), and David with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). Today we see parallel examples of powerful people abusing their position in the MP expenses scandal and banker bonuses. This all leads to a general mistrust and lack of confidence in people with power and authority.

Using Power Well

Good power is the opposite of all these distortions. Good power seeks to serve the purposes of God: empowering others rather than controlling them. Power is good when it is used to serve the interests of others instead of primarily our own interests. 'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.'

(Philippians 2:3-4)

Jesus modelled an 'others-centred' power when he sent out the disciples, as described in Luke 10. He trusted them, but he also held them accountable when they returned to report on what they had done. When Jesus ascended to heaven he delegated power to the church to carry on the mission of making disciples.

Spiritual Power

All the five dimensions of relational proximity are modelled perfectly in the Godhead. God is a God of relationship and his power flows from the Trinity in perfect agreement. Influence through the connection of relationship (and especially agreement) has a spiritual dimension to it and it is one of the most effective forms of power. A sense of mutual commitment in relationship is an important way to influence beyond organisational boundaries. Leadership effectiveness often ends up being about the strength of relationships. Those who are able to generate mutual commitment and agreement can exercise great influence without having formal organisational authority.

Spiritual power includes the power to forgive others because of God's forgiveness of us. Forgiving your boss is a vital way to maintain an attitude that is healthier and more positive. And as a boss, showing some forgiveness and grace to people who make mistakes models a culture that neutralises fear and encourages innovation, creativity, and change. Forgiveness also challenges us to examine ourselves and consider whether there is anything in us that needs to be dealt with before we can relate to power in a healthy way.

Spiritual power also includes the power of praying blessing. Believers have spiritual authority to pray blessing over all relationships and since God's blessing is wholly good, praying blessing brings a positive change that can sometimes be sensed if not seen.

SESSION 5 Relating to Power

Scene Setter

Welcome to the fifth session in this module about relating well in organisations, which forms part of the series on *Growing Disciples in Today's Workplace*. In the last session we looked at various kinds of power and what constitutes a good use of power. In this session we tackle the issue of how to improve relating to power within an organisational hierarchy.

Michael Schluter's relational proximity model is helpful for this discussion. We can look at the relationship with power through the lens of the five dimensions of relational proximity in order to study how relating to power might be improved.

The first two of these lenses we will consider are 'purpose' and 'information'.

Common Purpose – Being Accountable

Every organisation has purpose and the roles within it are designed to ultimately serve that common purpose. Our boss is there partly to ensure that happens, so the relationship with our boss is therefore linked first to the quality and value of our work. Working within any power hierarchy involves having some delegated responsibility. 'Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful' (1 Corinthians 4:2). So one obvious way to have a good relationship is to ensure we do our work well. Doing good

work is one of our discipleship responsibilities.

Many working relationship difficulties can be traced to confusion about expectations, which themselves stem from a lack of clarity in goals and delegated responsibility. Making sure we understand what is and what is not expected is really important. It is a joint responsibility to clarify roles and responsibilities, objectives, and performance measures. Asking questions in order to clarify the reasons and success criteria for our work makes sense, as does asking questions to determine whether others understand what is expected of them. When things are clear, relationships are usually less strained. When Jesus sent out the disciples he gave them very clear instructions and expectations, but he also showed them respect by not attempting to micromanage what they did (Luke 10:1-12).

Information - Try to Understand Your Manager and Subordinates

Being a leader can be lonely, because hierarchies naturally tend to create relational distance between people. There is a loneliness associated with a leadership position and it is remarkable how often senior people can feel insecure. Asking questions can help to open up the relationship. If we ask for feedback, either as a boss or a subordinate, we can gain understanding

and demonstrate the kind of vulnerability that helps deepen a relationship. Daniel did this with Arioch, the commander of the King's guard (Daniel 2:14-16).

Appropriate questions at appropriate times about your boss' or your subordinate's life can help to cement that relationship. Another way to try to understand your boss or your subordinate is to put yourself in their shoes and think about the kinds of pressures and issues they face. This can be a powerful way to gain a more all-round appreciation of them and better anticipate their needs in the workplace. It is not always easy to find appropriate times or ways to open up a conversation about someone's wider life interests, but having the issue in mind makes it more likely we can take an opportunity when it arises.

Teaching

Three other dimensions of relational proximity are communication, story, and parity. These lenses can also be helpful in improving the quality of relationship with those in power.

Communication

The way we communicate affects the depth of engagement we have with each other. People have different preferences about communication style and so need different approaches to become engaged. Some are naturally informal and have an 'open door'. Others prefer more structure and formality.

Many prefer face to face communication, but some prefer voicemail or written notes. Some prefer empathetic communication, whilst others are 'bullet point' people. Some people want frequent contact and others just want significant updates. So it makes sense to consider the preferred style of your boss and your subordinates and make some effort to adapt or tailor your communication style to each person's preference to strengthen your connection with them. As the apostle Paul said, 'Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible' (1 Corinthians 9:19).

Story

As we work with each other, we are participants in an evolving story of what is going on. Maintaining regular communication enables both parties better to know and share this ongoing story and avoid surprises. Don't wait for small problems to develop into big crises. Tell your manager promptly if you encounter difficulties with a project or if the team is not going to meet its deadline. Tell your subordinates as soon as possible if the parameters of what you or they are working on have changed. Arrange progress checks and schedule follow-up conversations at a sensible frequency. Jesus did this with the disciples and the 72 he sent out (Luke 10).

Shared stories and experiences help to generate trust and are a foundation for stronger relationships.

Submission to Power and Speaking Truth to Power

There are boundaries and limits on all human authority, because all authority is subject to a greater authority, and ultimately is under God (Colossians 4:1). Yet God has commanded that we be subject to the authorities that exist (Romans 13:1-5) and treat them with respect (Ephesians 6:5).

When the Sanhedrin tried to impose political correctness and instructed the disciples to stop talking about Jesus, Peter and John resisted (Acts 4:19-20) and suffered for it. Today in some workplaces, like the health service, there are similar restrictions on believers, who feel trapped between the injunction to submit to authority (Romans 13:1-2), and their desire to revere Christ as Lord and be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks them to give the reason for the hope that they have (1 Peter 3:15). The Christian Medical Fellowship recognises this tension, which exists in many public sector workplaces, and runs a course (called Saline Solution) designed to help Christian healthcare professionals bring Christ into their everyday work. It has helped hundreds become more comfortable and adept at practising medicine that addresses the needs of the whole person. Christians in all workplaces need to give thoughtful and prayerful consideration to creative ways to resolve the tension between spiritual opportunity and necessary legal compliance.

The Christian approach is not always to turn

the other cheek and be meek and mild. There are times when we must directly and firmly confront the wrongs and injustices in our organization. Jesus did this with the Pharisees when they tried to stop him healing on the Sabbath (John 7:23). Yet speaking truth to power is very challenging. Samuel Goldwyn, the film producer, once said, 'I want everyone to tell me the truth to my face, even if it costs them their jobs!' Because rudeness is wrong and half-heartedness is inept, an appropriate level of assertiveness with respect is important when confronting power. In order to challenge positional power we may need to use a different kind of power, like knowledge power, truth power, or the power that flows from experience.

A junior member in a law firm handling a takeover bid noticed that the minority shareholders in one company were not being given as much information as other shareholders. She raised this issue in a meeting where senior people were present and spoke out against the injustice that she saw, citing the reputational risk the firm was taking. That was a scary thing to tackle for a junior person and it required courage and assertiveness. However, the result was that the partners changed their approach.

SESSION 6 **Serving in Teams**

Scene Setter

Welcome to the sixth session in this module about relating well in organizations, which forms part of the series on *Growing Disciples in Today's Workplace*. Last time we tackled the issue of relationships within an organisational hierarchy of power and authority. This time we'll look at serving in teams.

Teamwork is vital in the workplace. The combination of different skills, gifts, and personalities mean that a diverse group of people working together towards a common goal can accomplish far more than the sum of their individual efforts. God commented on the high potential of teams in the building of the tower of Babel in Genesis: 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them' (Genesis 11:6). Although the Babel project was selfish and flawed, the Lord's comment showed how much people working together can accomplish. It also showed that effective teamwork relies on good communication. By disrupting communication, through confusing the language, God stopped the Babel team achieving their selfish goal to 'make a name for themselves'.

What appears to be a performance issue in a team can often have a relational core. Patrick Lencioni in his book *The Five Dysfunctions of*

a Team describes five reasons why teams struggle or fail.

His five reasons are: the absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results. Interestingly, these five problems are inversely correlated with Michael Schluter's five positive dimensions of relational proximity, which we have considered in previous sessions. Those five dimensions are: story, communication, common purpose, power, and information.

So, for example, the absence of trust amongst team members (which includes not being able to predict their behaviour) is partly countered by knowing their history in the team and knowing more information about them. Fear of conflict can be partly neutralized by a willingness to talk face-to-face. A lack of commitment in a team may be turned around by having a clear common purpose, because shared commitment will be more likely when everyone has the same goal. So Schluter's dimensions of relational health are relevant to improving team effectiveness.

The way people relate to each other in a team can also be mirrored in the way whole teams relate to other teams. Where team goals are aligned with other teams in a large organisation then cooperation between them becomes more natural, but loyalties and priorities can be tested when

people belong to multiple teams with slightly differing goals. Sometimes we see negative individual behaviours like putting others down, retaliation, and revenge mirrored in inter-team rivalry and 'silos' that don't work together in organisations.

Teaching

Love and Trust in the Team

As a team member, the 'one another' commands of Scripture are a helpful checklist. These commands lay a foundation for attitudes and behaviours that are empathetic, considerate, and unifying. The way team members communicate should reflect this foundation. Just the simple practice of having good manners and dealing with others in a thoughtful and positive way makes a huge difference to the culture of any team. Taking the trouble to give genuine affirmation and using friendly salutations in written communication fosters a positive atmosphere.

Yet love must sometimes also be tough and being honest with one another is important. Even so, although we are to speak truth to one another and correct errors, it is good to think about what truth is appropriate in the situation to avoid putting people down or being unnecessarily hurtful. We are to correct mistakes, but in doing so we do not have to generalise about someone's capability in a way that damages them. The apostle

Paul corrected Peter when he decided to withdraw himself to eat with the Jews at Antioch (Galatians 2:14). That must have been a difficult moment and it was risky because Peter was one of the senior apostles on whom Paul's accreditation depended. But Paul knew that Peter's actions were undermining the truth that the gospel is entirely about grace and not rules. The way he corrected Peter was not by telling him off or putting him down, it was by asking him a penetrating question.

Trust in a team is more than being able to predict someone's behaviour based on past performance. Trust needs more than time to experience someone, trust needs transparency. To overcome Lencioni's first dysfunction of a team (absence of trust), team members need to be willing to be vulnerable to each other without the fear of being put down; to get beyond rituals and cliché towards shared feelings and real rapport. This means being appropriately open about ourselves, and also sensitive and accepting of others when they are vulnerable: as the old Dutch saying goes, 'trust arrives on foot but leaves on horseback'. 'All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble' (1 Peter 5:5).

Managing Conflict

Conflict is a normal part of team relationships and healthy conflict is resolved quickly through direct and courteous means. Directness matters in conflict management. To have open conversations involves courage and risk. Tackling conflict means taking time to listen to differing points of view and recognising differing cultural norms. Responding to criticism with empathy and taking responsibility to apologise for shortcomings in our own actions help with conflict resolution. Staying focused on the current issue and not past issues, avoiding being judgmental or jumping to conclusions, and looking for compromise are also keys to resolving conflict. Sometimes a third party can be helpful, but it is best if the parties in conflict resolve the matter themselves before having to escalate it (Matthew 18:15). 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matthew 5:9).

Technology in today's working environment makes remote working and electronic communication normal. This has positive and negative aspects to it. When it comes to conflict, it is usually better and simpler to try to resolve conflict by meeting in person. We can miss key emotional and behavioural signals when communicating electronically, and emoticons are not an adequate substitute. If you can't meet in person then a video call is probably the next best thing, followed by a telephone call. 'Daisy chain'

emails that take up time and can be read by third parties are generally not a good idea.

Working within a team is working with a group of imperfect people and that is a prime context for learning to love others. Love in action is described in Romans 12:9-21, and it is a great mandate for life in a team:

'Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good' (Romans 12:9-21).

SESSION 7 **Leading Teams**

Scene Setter

Welcome to the seventh and final session in this module about relating well in organisations, which forms part of the series on *Growing Disciples in Today's Workplace*. Last time we tackled the topic of serving in teams. In this final session we look at some relational aspects of leading teams.

Some teams are self-organising (which means they have no formal leader) although in practice leadership moves by consent between different individuals in the team, depending on the situation and expertise and capability. However, most teams have a recognised leader whose responsibility is to ensure that the three components of successful teamwork are achieved: the tasks are accomplished; the individuals on the team are motivated and developed; and the inherent capability of the team is realised.

Leading a team means paying attention to all three of these components, which means being able to clearly describe the goal or task, coach the people, and encourage and care for the group as a whole.

As in all relationships, the extent to which the team leader and the team members have a selfish orientation or an orientation towards others determines how healthy the team is. Caring for others is a key biblical principle and selfishness is the opposite. Selfishness

is the equivalent of singing out of tune in a team. Teams tend to spiral upwards into productive community (all for one and one for all) or spiral downwards into selfishness (every person for themselves). To stop this downward spiral, team leaders must avoid promoting themselves and intervene to correct selfish or destructive behaviours in others. To some extent all team members have that responsibility.

Modelling and inspiring supportive behaviours catalyses the upward spiral. Grace in a leader can work its way out in simple things like smiling, appropriate eye contact, open body language, addressing others with a friendly tone, and 'being present' which helps to create a positive environment. Beyond that, the way a leader shows gratitude and recognition, or correction and rebuke, when appropriate, are 'moments of truth' in the team's culture. A good balance of challenge and support is needed. For example, some leaders are overly critical, whilst others are relentlessly positive but find it difficult to tackle poor behaviour. Both extremes can damage a team's wellbeing and morale because fairness and justice are important to people, as well as to God. A good leader must be fair and be seen to be fair, which includes making sure the team members have clear responsibilities and accountability.

Teaching

The Bible has many examples of teams. Probably the best known is Jesus' team of disciples. Nehemiah led a huge team involved in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. We can learn from these leaders and the kind of leadership interventions they made.

Attributes of Jesus' Leadership

Prayer & Vision

A foundational attribute of Jesus' leadership was his commitment to prayer. His leadership and vision flowed from his relationship with the Father. No doubt his prayers included his purposes for his team and his reflections about them. 'Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed' (Mark 1:35). 'After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray' (Matthew 14:23).

Linked to prayer, one of the most powerful aspects of Jesus' leadership was his ability to cast a vision with clarity, simplicity, and directness. Not long after Jesus began his ministry John the Baptist was arrested. When this happened 'Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel"' (Mark 1:14-15). He kept focused on the right

priorities consistent with the vision. 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent' (Luke 4:43).

Forming a Team based on Values & Purpose

In beginning to form his team, in Matthew 4, the first two men that Jesus called (Andrew and Peter) were fishermen who were also brothers. The next two recruits were friends of Peter and Andrew who were also fishermen. So in forming his team, Jesus did not start by selecting people with obviously high potential. He began with people who shared common traits and values. These four men did not have to explain themselves to one another. They knew each other's background story (which is one of the dimensions of relational proximity). Dale Roach of likeateam.com points out that when a leader is building a team it helps to have a core group of people who understand each other. Jesus' team started with people who shared some common ground and this strong team foundation then enabled the calling of others with quite different backgrounds.

Nehemiah also recruited his large team of people using a common interest – rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem – to bind them together as a team. Whatever their personalities or preferences, they could all agree on the common purpose (another dimension of relational proximity).

Building Strong Relationships

As Jesus expanded his team he increased its diversity in some surprising ways. For example, Matthew the tax collector worked for Rome in the collection of Roman taxes, while Simon the Zealot was an ardent Jewish nationalist. For Simon the idea of paying taxes to Rome went against everything he believed in, so Simon probably hated Roman tax collectors with a passion. Bringing these two men together in the same team showed the power of Jesus to draw and integrate diverse people. Leading a team is about building relationships.

Empowerment, Challenge and Support

In Luke 9:1-6, which covers Jesus sending out the twelve, we see Jesus delegating power and authority, as well as giving guidelines on how the work was to be done. He empowered and trusted his team. Yet he also required accountability, and after the disciples had returned and given an account of their work he cared for the team by taking them away for a rest.

Then in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9:12-17) Jesus challenges his team to act ('You give them something to eat'), but then directs and supports them in the execution of the miracle. These interventions of challenge and support helped the disciples to grow.

Confronting Poor Behaviour

Jesus also had the ability to confront behaviour problems and when necessary correct and rebuke people on his team. For example, he immediately rebuked James and John when they suggested calling fire down to destroy some Samaritans (Luke 9:55). Nehemiah showed the same quality: he did not hesitate to tackle difficult issues like unfairness (Nehemiah 5:6-13) and, if necessary, rebuke and discipline people (Nehemiah 13:11, 25).

Centrality of Relationship

The effectiveness of Jesus' team leadership flowed from his commitment to close relationships, which itself flowed from his close relationship with the Father. He put relationship at the heart of his approach as a leader, building trust and coaching his team to become like him. Michael Schluter's five dimensions of relational proximity are clearly evident in Jesus' approach – he was direct, he got to know people, he stayed with the same people over time, he demonstrated respect – even though he was God, and he inspired people with a common purpose.

Which of the attributes of Jesus' leadership do you need more?