

Responsive Leadership for Experienced Leaders: Leading Fully Human People

How can we apply the biblical principles of “being fully human” to teams and organisations? In this session, we will examine how to exercise Godly leadership in circumstances that are not of our choosing or clearly out of our control, looking at both crisis and complexity angles. How can our strategies, culture, structures, and systems reflect the worth and finitude of the people we lead and the people that our organisations serve?

John Stevens is the National Director of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, a family of over 500 Bible-centred churches in the UK, a position that he has held since 2010. Prior to this he was one of the founding pastors of City Evangelical Church Birmingham, which was planted in the centre of the UK’s 2nd largest city in 1999. He was instrumental in starting the Midlands Gospel Partnership, was the course Director of the Midlands Ministry Training Course and is a visiting lecturer at Oak Hill Theological College. John is also one of the pastors of Christchurch Market Harborough, a church he helped to plant when he took up his current role. He was converted whilst studying law at Cambridge University, and after taking a post-graduate degree at the University of Oxford worked for 16 years as a University Lecturer, ending his career as Deputy Head of the Law School at the University of Birmingham. John is married to Ursula and they have four children aged between 12 and 7. He blogs at www.john-stevens.com on theology, church life and ministry, culture and politics.

1. What does it mean to be fully human?

Created – Limited and finite

Commissioned – God’s representative rulers (Gen 1v26)

Designed for relationships

Fallen – Morally flawed and sinful (Romans 1v18-32)

Redeemed – Being recreated into likeness of Christ (Col 3v10)

Mortal but longing for eternity – Waiting for the new creation

2. Why does our humanity necessitate teams and organisations?

1 Corinthians 12-14

Our finitude means that we need each other

No individual has all the gifts needed to do God’s work

No individual has all the wisdom needed to discern God’s purposes

God’s purposes are accomplished by people working together

The Trinity as a 'team'

Adam and Eve as a 'team'

Israel as a 'team'

Jesus' disciples as a 'team'

The church as a 'team'

Organisations are structured teams established to accomplish specific goals

3. Key challenges in leading a 'fully human' team

Recruitment of team members (eg Acts 16v1-5; 1 Timothy 3v1-9)

Diversity of team members

- Diversity of gifting

- Diversity of personality

- Diversity of ethnicity

- Diversity of gender

Delegation to team members (eg Exodus 18v1-2; Matthew 28v16-20;

Expectations of team members

Unity of team members

Support/care of team members (eg

Grace to team members

Accountability of team members

- Gospel convictions

- Godly character

- Competence

4. Team leadership in crisis situations

Accept lack of knowledge/competence

Draw on collective wisdom

Pray & seek the Lord

Plan with faith to do what judge best

Admit mistakes and change plans if necessary

Review, reflect and learn from experience

Case Study

Fast growing organisation due to unexpected demand for its programmes. Existing team is about 15 staff, working across four locations. Funding and staffing are lagging behind the pace at which programmes are growing. New funding is coming through and new staff are being recruited but will not be available for 2-3 months, after which it will take a good 2-3 months to get them trained up.

Most of the current staff are showing great commitment and initiative, working together to keep everything running smoothly and coping fairly well with the pressure.. One staff member is very capable but works in a very isolated and inflexible way.. Another staff member has struggled to grow with the job and is being carried by other members of the team. These two factors were not a major issue but are now being exposed as the demands on the team have increased. In addition, staff absence due to sickness has increased over the past year (not obvs linked to stress; seems to be a widespread post-covid immunity issue). The leadership team has been picking up a lot the slack, working longer hours.

Today it was learned that a key staff member is diagnosed with a serious illness, counting them out of work for at least three months.

What does the leadership team do now?