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Five Kinds of Leaders

Donald McGavran

In 1981, Donald McGavran presented a series of lectures at Manhattan Christian College. Over the next few journals, we will publish this series in a continuing effort to honor McGavran and his legacy of Church Growth Missiology. This is the fourth in the series. —Editor

This article has been transcribed from the taped lectures. I am going to talk to you this morning about a rather practical topic. It is not profound and earthshaking, but it's one aspect of the growth of the church. And it is something that all of us need, and it is something on which we need illumination. I am going to talk about five kinds of leaders, which growing churches need.

So frequently we zero in on and focus our attention on one kind of leader—the one kind that is in short supply. And we forget that there are five kinds of leaders needed by growing churches. Now I am going to describe these five kinds, and I am going to call them “Class One leaders,” and “Class Two leaders,” and “Class Three leaders,” and “Class Four leaders,” and “Class Five leaders.”

Now Class One leaders are unpaid leaders heading in—*Unpaid leaders heading in*—Now they are the unpaid leaders who are serving existing Christians in existing churches. They are the elders—a fine group of serious minded, responsible, able Christians—the elders of the church, of the churches around the world. These are the deacons, and the treasurers, and the session members, and the tremendous army of Sunday school teachers. One of the great differences, you know, between the older church and the younger churches, are that the younger churches frequently don't get this kind of voluntary, class 1 leaders in great numbers, particularly among the illiterate people. You look

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in vain for Sunday school teachers, both for the ability to read the Bible and for the willingness to give time to a lot of little kids who don't pay attention to much; and the people who sing in the choir. I am always impressed by the tremendous volume of beautiful praise that ascends to God in the churches of the world.

I was told that I'd always admire Hawaiian music. And I thought, well you know, Hawaiians are just naturally musical. And without thinking about it, I said to myself, back in those days, when those scantily-clad maidens were playing on the beaches of Wai-ke-ke before the coming of the West, they must have been singing these beautiful, beautiful melodies. Because it is just in them, they are naturally musical. But that's incomplete. Before they became Christians, they didn't have much music. And if you analyze Hawaiian music today, it grew right out of the hymns of those early missionaries taught them. And you'll find strains of those hymns and (musical) phrases intertwined.

Christians are singing people. And the great volume of time poured out in choir practice and choir singing is something to be admired and you stand back in awe and look at it in unbelief that this could be true. And the sick visitors, and the people who call up lonely members of the church, or go out to see them, and the flower arrangements, the flower arrangers in our American churches, and the ushers, and, and, and ... and!

I owe a great deal in my life to my scout master, a man named Bossert, who used to be a clerk, in the post office at Tulsa, Oklahoma. He wasn't a very gifted man, but he loved kids. And he gave himself to the scout troops at the First Christian Church. I don't remember the name of anyone else in that church, but I remember his name. He was a Class One leader: Unpaid leaders—*unpaid*—heading in, serving those who come to the church, who are members of the church, who are attenders of the church.

If you just pause to think what an amount of money would be needed if you paid for these services. Heh! It would break up any church. If you paid for Class One leaders, you'd break up any church. And if any church doesn't have any Class One leaders, it's got a poor, thin ministry. What an enrichment to make! What an essential part of the church they are!

Then there are Class Two leaders. These are unpaid leaders heading out! These are not concerned with those that are already Christian. These are concerned with those yet to become Christians: Unpaid leaders heading out. These may be people working for brotherhood, or communicating the gospel, or teaching literacy; they go two by two down the street knocking on doors, "would you like to study the Bible?" "Would you like us to teach

it to you?" And ninety-nine people say no! Some of them slam the door in their faces. But they just go quietly and cheerfully and pleasantly on, and knock on another door and pretty soon they find someone who says, "Yes!" And so they start teaching the Bible. Class Two leaders. You'll see them distributing tracks. I'll never forget when I first visited Columbia Bible College. I was met at the airport by a student, who, as he drove me back, he was telling me about the ministry that he and others students at CBD had in the jails of South Carolina. Class Two leader. Unpaid leader heading out! Nobody else is ministry in the jails. Nobody else has this concern and care. That these who are children of God realize that they're children, and these who have been redeemed by the blood, realize that they've been redeemed by the blood, and love him, and serve him, and obey him, and yield their lives to him ... nobody else has this concern ... but the unpaid leaders heading out. Class Two leaders. You see them standing on the street corners, all around the world, Bombay maybe or Madras. And here they are preaching as thousands streamed by, and they sing a little bit, and they preach a little bit, when they sing they attract people when they preach, they drive people away, and so the crowd gathers and then disperses, and then the crowd gathers and then it disperses, and the crowd gathers then it disperses, and they hand out tracks, and you say to yourselves, "well ... does this make any difference?" And then here are people when in the face of difficulty, they are proclaiming Christ.

I was driving in the Philippines from Poblacion to Poblacion in a bus, and the Philippine minister who was taking me around, as we left one town he pointed out at the hillside, and here were five young people scrambling up the hillside on a narrow little path, they disappeared into a bamboo thicket as we arrived. He said, "those are my young people, and they're going to go over that mountain." And I looked at the mountain. Bigger than anything around here—about a thousand feet up. And then he said, "five kilometers down on the other side, there is a barrio in which there's three families of Christians. And these young people—some girls as well as boys by the way—go over there every Sunday to be with them when they worship God, to make sure they have enough volume so that the singing sounds good. You know, when three families get together and they don't always attend, and two or three young people come there, the singing sounds pretty sick—it's thin, and reedy, and off key, and the words are forgotten and it just doesn't go so well. But when you have five young people from CBC, you know, or some church, they come over there, why, it gives a lot of courage and volume;

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unpaid leaders heading out. Heading out ... to the tune of a couple of hours stiff walking there, and a couple of hours stiff walking back. Class Two leaders.

Melvin Hodges has told me about an area down in Nicaragua—no, I guess it's Salvador—where there's a series of Assemblies of God churches out over the hill. A most unlikely place, you know. Why should there be churches there? He says, "You can't understand it unless you realize there's a telephone line running there." Well I say, "What does a telephone line have to do with it? Why through the forest?" He says, "The telephone-line man goes through there. And whenever a telephone-line man goes through there, a church springs up." He stops. He takes out his Bible. He starts reading the Bible. "What are you reading there, guy?" "You want to hear it!" And so conversation arises. They gather around. No one else is reading anything. If he were reading communist literature they'd gather. And pretty soon, the Word has its way in their hearts. Pretty soon there're other believers. And pretty soon there are a little cluster of believers and then there's a church. Churches have arisen. And that lines-men is a Class Two leader; Unpaid, heading-out, spreading the word!

I remember in Puerto Rico when I was there in nineteen-hundred and fifty-five, I was preaching the dedicatory service of a fine, big, reinforced concrete church—it seat four-hundred; that was the total membership of that church—and I was congratulating them on building such a fine church, and I asked, "When did this church began." Now this is fifty-five, remember. They said, "It began in 1937, and this is our fifth church." The first church was just a veranda of a single believer's home, where he gathered a number of people. Then after they got five or six, they built a little church. But there faith wasn't very big, it was about the size of a postage stamp. And it was just a little roof, a little shed on one corner of his property. And then they outgrew that, so they tore that down, and built another. And that was a little bit bigger, still a shack. And the third was a shack. And then the fourth, right after World War II, it was quite considerable, a big shack. And then they said, "Here we are, four-hundred people, let's build a church." And so they built themselves a real church and they had made mahogany pews. That isn't conventional anymore. And they said, "You haven't seen anything yet." They said, "This is just our church." "Listen! We've got six others." I said, "Where?" "Well," they said, "all out across the city." And they said, "if you want to see them, come this afternoon, that's when we go out." And so I went to the church in the afternoon, and there were about a hundred and forty—no not that many—

there were between fifty and sixty, mostly men, some young people, one or two women, gathered there. And after prayer service, they'd spanned out to various places for which they walked—nobody drove in cars, they weren't that kind of people. And I visited three of them, and they were terribly discouraging—just little holes in the wall, a few kids, I couldn't see any future in that. But those laymen were going there Sunday after Sunday, and teaching those who were there. And when I said to them, "Do you really think you ought to do it?" They said, "well come on to the next one." The next one had about fifty, twenty, believers. And they built themselves a shack. And then the next one the shack was still bigger. And the sixth one was what they called our "El Mango Church." And they called it the "El Mango Church" because it met under the shade of a big Mango tree. There were about two-hundred people there. They bought up the chairs, they bought up the benches, they bought up the Bibles, they bought a lot over here, and they were ready to take off. You see, all those forty, fifty, sixty people gathered were unpaid leaders heading-out. Well, those are Class Two.

Then there are Class Three leaders. Now these are the paid or partially paid leaders of small churches. Let me repeat—*small churches*. The paid are partially paid leaders of small churches. You see, as the church explodes across the world—and that's exactly what's happening now—as the church explodes across the world its typical form is the small church. Great big churches don't arise spontaneously. They always start as small churches.

I frequently say that nothing goes to men but boys. If you want to get a lot of big, outstanding men, you've got to have a lot of little, squirming, boy babies. There just isn't no other way to get men. They don't grow from cabbages, they don't grow eggs, they just grow from boy babies. If you want to have a lot of men, you've got to have a lot of boy babies. And if you want to have a lot of big churches, you've got to have a lot of little churches. There just is no way to get churches except by little churches. And the typical form of the church out around the world is little churches.

The Southern Baptists, you know, now have ten million members, and so do the United Methodists and the Churches of Christ have their millions. But all of these three bodies started out as small churches here in North America. I visited the Shiloh battlefield a few years ago. You know why they call it "Shiloh"? Because of the Shiloh church house. That's why I went. I thought I'd see the Shiloh church house. Is there no church like this? There isn't at all! Its square footage is no more than what I am standing on up here. It's a little log cabin in the middle of the

forest; that was the Shiloh church. And churches here in North America have started as small churches.

If you go to Kansas City, you may go to see the Kansas City Country Club Christian Church: Membership three-thousand, six-hundred and seventy-two. And fifty-seven members of that church are members of their rotary club in Kansas City. I mean it, it's really a ride. It gives lots of money. It packs them in. It hires famous preachers. You know how it started? Twelve members in a house. Such small financial resources that the only preacher they could call was a preacher who would retire because he was dying of Tuberculosis. He said, "I might as well die in harness, instead of sitting, moping in my house, and so he consented to preach for them. And that grew to become the Kansas City Country Club Christian Church. What did I tell you? Little churches grow into big churches ... sometimes (laughs!).

And the typical church in so much of the mission field where you and I work is the little church. I did a survey of some Baptist churches in Arissa. There average membership was twenty-seven: Scattered typically in three villages. Two or three families there, three or four families here, one family yonder, total of twenty-seven baptized believers; that was the church. Not much of a church. A little church. But that's the typical form of it. In the Philippines, sixty percent of the membership of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, which is the largest Protestant denomination (unless you count the United Pentecostals and the Seventh-Day Adventists), sixty percent of the membership of that church is in congregations of less than sixty members. Sixty, running-down to ten. And in El Salvador, where the Assemblies have had some great growth, the average church is twelve in number. Twelve baptized believers make a church.

Now you see, these small churches they cannot pay much. Why if a church like that had a B.A., B.D. come with his middle class tastes and his middle class wife and live in their midst, and if they had to support them, it would be a disaster. They can't pay much. They've got to have theological, biblical leadership on their level. And they don't want highly trained and highly paid pastors. Because highly trained and highly paid pastors, unless they're men of very, very, very, very, very great dedication, they think "we're up here" and "those people" are down there. And they start speaking about "those people." And as soon as the pastor starts speaking about his congregation as "those people," he's finished! You've got to have pastors that are at one with their peoples. They like to sit down and talk with them. And to eat what they eat without turning up their noses at it. And they feel quite at home there. And it's not a tension to be with these

people. It's just fun to be with *our* people. That's the kind of people who make good pastors. That means that a lot of lay pastors, a lot of tent-making ministers (like Paul), and part-time pastors, and part-time ministers, and pastors who get the offerings that amount to \$1.27 a week, and then grow all they eat. Otherwise they'd starve to death. Well, all I am talking about—Class Three Leaders. Do you see? And whether they are ordained or unordained doesn't make too much difference. These Class Three Leaders they should know a lot of Bible. And one reason we emphasize the extension seminary so much—at the School of Missions and the Institute for Church Growth—is because there doesn't seem to be any other way to get these Class Three leaders really trained. Then to get out where they are and train them in the field, so to speak.

End of Side One

Then there're Class Four Leaders. These are the paid leaders of large churches. We don't want to make the mistake of thinking that the younger churches have nothing but small churches. They have their share of large churches. And these large churches require Class Four leaders; paid leaders of large churches. As churches multiply around the world, a proportion of them go big: two hundred members, three hundred members, six hundred members, nine hundred members, a thousand members, two thousand members, four thousand members, six thousand members. This is the kind of younger church that you will find. And these numbers that I gave you are not pulled out of the air. As I mention these numbers, visions of particular congregations flashed into my mind. There there on the ground. You can go and see them. You can count them. In Read's book, *New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil*,¹ he has a big brown dot for every church of six thousand. And in some sections of Brazil, they just cover a large share of his small maps.

Now these Class Four leaders must be well trained. They must be the peers in training of missionaries. They must have as good training as you and I have. And because of, O'h let's say, twenty or thirty years ago, the missionary was to all intents and purpose the Class Four leader. He was the pastor. He was the executive secretary of his denomination. Or he was the presiding bishop. Or he was the superintendent—they didn't him that, but that's what he was. He provided this Class Four leadership for a lot of small churches. But as the churches grew bigger, it became perfectly obvious (particularly after European domination ended) that we need a lot of Class Four leaders. And a great deal of theological education of the last twenty years, has been de-

voted to getting good Class Four leaders with lots of education.

And so, a great many people, if you talk about leadership training, they immediately think Class Four leaders. And an entirely disproportionate amount of time, and prayer and money in leadership training in missions has gone to the preparation of Class Four leaders. And that was probably necessary at that time, because we had to bring up large numbers of nationals to the place that they would compete on equal terms with missionaries. Because if you turnover your Class Four missionaries—missionaries with education, Class Four men—turnover them to Class Three national leaders (a slight education, a slight income) the turnover is phony! You can say, “we give you the authority, but the authority will still reside with the man of better preparation, larger mind, greater capability. We’ve got to create this kind of national leader—Class Four leaders are very greatly needed, and must be multiplied.

And then there is Class Five leaders. I shan’t say much about these. These are international leaders. They speak several languages. There good in Tugala and English. They speak Lingala and French. They know Spanish and English. They represent their denominations abroad. They come to the United States and speak in our churches and people are charmed (Manuel Gaxiola of Mexico, who translated *Latin America Church Growth*, by the way, into Spanish). Beautiful translation! He’s a professional translator. He gets paid fairly large sums of money to do this translation. He did it for *Latin America Church Growth* for a very small sum, as a service. Or, Wang Duck Kin, who studied with us, who in Korea is probably going to be the next Minister of the Interior, unlike our Minister of Interior in Washington, D. C. Or Bishop Solomon, or Rueben Lawrece, these international figures who pass around amongst the churches and to help tie the church of Jesus Christ together and to affirm in a loud voice that the church of Jesus Christ is not just an assembly of churches, it is also the body of Christ throughout the earth.

Now then, one of the things that needs to be said in regards to this is that in respect of growing churches, the proportion (please jot this down!) of Class One, Class Two, Class Three, and Class Four leaders is a matter of *absolute* importance. Let me just illustrate this: Here’s denomination A and denomination B. In denomination A, you have a proportion like this: You have a large number of Class One leaders. You have relatively few Class Two leaders. And consequently, you have few Class Three leaders. And you have a good many Class Four leaders. And you have a fair number of Class Five leaders. That’s the profile of denomination A in Latin America, or Asia, or wherever it

happens to be. Now the profile of denomination B runs about like this: About an equal number of Class One leaders, but actually more Class Two leaders than Class One leaders like that. And a large number of Class Three leaders, and a small number of Class Four leaders, and almost no Class Five leaders. If one man were to die, they wouldn't have any Class Five leaders.

Now those are two different kinds of churches. Those are two different denominations. Not because one's Methodist and the other Baptist, or one's Baptist and the other is Methodist. But because they just a different kind of church! They could both be Baptist, they could both be Methodist, they're just a different kind of church. Now as you look at those, denomination A and denomination B, focus your eyes on the board. Tell me, which one is the growing church? No question about it! Furthermore, A can't grow. A can't grow! And if the Holy Spirit decided to make church A grow, you know what the first thing the Holy Spirit would do, he'd multiply Class Two leaders. Without Class Two leaders, and without Class Three leaders, this church is stopped from growing. This is necessary to growth. Like the trunk of a tree is necessary to supporting its great umbrella of leaves and branches.

Now it's important for us to see this because frequently we try to have church growth without, we try to have that fine umbrella of leaves—and I've been enjoying very much these magnificent trees up here at Bentley, there just gorgeous—and if you try to have this big umbrella of leaves without a big, thick trunk, you'd be in trouble. If you try to get church growth without a lot of Class Two leaders, you're in trouble.

Now let me just through this in—Class One and Class Two, of course, are not mutually exclusive. It's not that Class One are all one kind of people and Class Two are all another kind of people. Sometimes Class One's are Class Twos. And Class Two's are Class Ones. And you mustn't be too rigid in your distinctions here. But by and large, unless a church has a great army of people, who are concerned about getting the gospel *out*, it doesn't get out!

Audience: Are you then telling us that these Classes are the crux?

That's the form in which the growing church surfaces.

Audience: So that's the out?

That's the out.

Now let me mention, very briefly, three further principles that I think hang with this, and are parts of this.

Leaders chosen—leaders of any kind (one, two, three, four, five) chosen from growing segments of the church are usually

effective (more effective) for church growth than those chosen from non-growing sectors. We've been accustomed in this seminar to think of a church arising from different homogeneous units. Some units have been growing very greatly, and some have been growing very little, and there was that diagram that Mr. Godbull put on the board of the big stations where most of their resources, and most of their missionaries were and had very little growth. And they came out here, they had rapid growth in a place that was slightly occupied. Well, this is a very common picture.

What I am saying is that if you choose your leaders from the place that the church has grown, there're going to have greater potential for growth, than if you choose them from the place that the church hasn't grown. This handicaps them to start with. I first saw this in my work in India, when I began choosing my leaders from the old Christian community that has arisen out of a famine, and they'd grown up in an orphanage. They were good Christians, and they came on time, and they didn't have much woman trouble, and they were responsible in regard to money matters, and they took learning well, they'd been in school for a very longtime and they knew how to study books and they make very good pastors. And when you'd have that kind of pastor, the church didn't grow. And when you'd have pastors from the village people, who were a pretty undisciplined lot, they had never sat through all eight years of childhood in front of a desk and opened book, and done what the teacher told them to do. And they weren't accustomed to doing what anybody told them to do. They were as independent as hogs on ice (laughs!). And they intended to remain that way. And they had woman trouble, and they didn't arrive on time, and there church services were pretty sloppy. But they knew their people, and the pastors chosen from that second group of persons were more evangelistically potent than from the first. And it was a great shock to me. And I didn't like to believe it. But finally I was forced to believe it because the facts were that way. Leaders chosen from the growing segments of the church are usually more effective for church growth than those chosen from non-growing segments.

Another principle: the function of Class Three and Class Four leaders is to multiply Class Twos and Class Ones. There're function is not to administer the church, run the church, or do most of the teaching themselves, maybe not even to preaching good sermons (I don't want to overstress that; that's not quite true). The function of Class Three's and Class Four's is to multiply Class Twos and Class Ones, not kill them off. A good many

Class Fours are engaged in killing off Class Threes and Class Two's. There're jealous of them. "Look we're the pastors in this church, you are not. Don't infringe on our rights." Now, wherever you find this you have a slow, growing church. The function of Class Four's and Class Three's is to multiply Class Two's and Class One's. This is so obvious that I shan't do more than state it.

And then finally, Bible colleges and theological training schools (and extension seminaries), manned by church-multiplying scholars, produce more church-multipliers than those manned by scholars who know little or nothing about multiplying churches. In other words, a professor of Old Testament or New Testament or dogmatics or what have you, if he is at the same time a church multiplier himself (if he holds meetings that ought to have churches and establishes churches; if he's preaching on Sunday to new churches) the boys who study under him and learn dogmatics, will make better church multipliers, than if he's just a scholar who knows his books, who knows dogmatics, and doesn't care a bit if churches multiply or not. And this becomes particularly noticeable when the entire faculty of a seminary (or Bible College or an extension seminary or what have you) is marked in these ways. So that part of the function of you men who are missionaries and administrators and have these things at least partially under your control, is to point men to the seminaries and Bible schools and theological training schools of all sorts and extension seminaries, who themselves are multipliers; who themselves are engaged in the job.

The Institute of Church Growth began at Northwest Christian College. Northwest Christian College has an interesting history. Back in 1890 when it was founded, its faculty was made up of preachers who were engaged in preaching, winning decisions, and planting new churches. And at that time, the student body was very effective. There was a team of body evangelists (all of them under eighteen), who were freshman back in this school in 1895, and they rocketed up and down the Willamette Valley planting churches. Everybody wanted to see these boy wonders. They had one fellow who was very gifted in preaching, one gifted in singing, and they really made an impact. Well, they would never have done that except there professor was this way. And then as the years past, Northwest Christian College gradually shifted over, until at the present time, there're practically no professors who are interested in planting churches. And, consequently, as the students go through they're not interested in planting churches. The curriculum is about the same now as it was 1890-1920. These things do have an influence. They have an

influence not only in the United States but around the world.

Well, so much for the presentation, now let's have some discussion.

Audience: Would you say the application of this last is you have a young fellow who just now finished seminary here in the states, he wants to go to the field, he wants to drop right in to seminary teaching, but should he take a church and undergo church growth.

In my volume, *Multiplying Churches in the Philippines*, I speak specifically to that and I my recommendation to that is every young missionary should not only learn the language, but have experiences in the churches. Ideally, it would be just ideal to make him an apprentice to three or four ministers who are successful—not unsuccessful ministers, but successful ministers. And have him pass from one to another, six months here, a year there, three months yonder, and then put him in some place where he functions on his own, and then bring him into the seminary.

Audience: What your saying, then, is that he should have two jobs then; teach them and pastor or evangelize them.

Yes, yes, I think that's ideal.

Audience: You're saying that ought to be in North America?

Yes, yes. I think it would make a big difference in North America.

Audience: You want more Class Two leaders, what's the button you push, is there some simple formula? (laughs!)

Well, there are some buttons you push with your knees, and there're some buttons that you push with your biceps, and some buttons that you push with your head. I mean there are a lot of buttons. Believe me, there isn't one formula. There's no answer other than using one's head, and using one's heart, and praying a lot, and seeking to do God's will. As you do this, *and* see the need for Class Two's, *and* see the need for lay ministry, God will open up ways before you. By the way, all of you jot down the name of a book: *Laity Mobilized!*² This is by Neil Braun, the missionary to Japan, and it's just published by Eerdmans. *Laity Mobilized!* And it emphasizes a great of Class Two and Class Three leaders. It doesn't call them that. It calls them, 'laity.' But nevertheless, it's a very useful book, and I foretell for it a very considerable vogue.

Writer

McGavran, Donald A. Dr. Donald A. McGavran is widely noted as the founder of the modern Church Growth movement. After a distinguished career as a field missionary in India (1923-1954), he served as a traveling researcher and visiting professor of Church Growth missiology. In 1961 he founded the Institute for Church Growth in Eugene, Oregon and eventually became founding dean of the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA.

NOTES

1. William R. Read, *New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil* (W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965).
2. Neil Braun, *Laitiy Mobilized: reflections on church growth in Japan and other lands* (W. B. Eerdmans, 1971).