**Strategic Formation**

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J. Robert Clinton has studied leadership from a Bible-centered perspective for four plus decades. He and his students at Fuller seminary have researched case studies of over four thousand Biblical, historical, and contemporary leaders representing men and women from diverse social and cultural circumstances.

From these studies, Clinton (*The Making of a Leader*, p. 14) has developed the following definition of Biblical leadership:

**“Leadership is a dynamic process in which a man or woman with God-given**

**capacity and God-given responsibility influences a specific group of**

**God’s people toward God’s purpose for that group.”**

This process of becoming an effective Christian leader usually involves the following principles:

* + God develops a leader over a lifetime
  + All leaders are disciples, but not all disciples are leaders
  + God sovereignly uses people, circumstances and ministry assignments to shape the life of the leader
  + Effective ministry comes out of a “being” relationship with God
  + If we obey God’s will, we will grow in character and influence. If we do not obey God’s will, we will stagnate in character and influence
  + Mature leadership involves an integration of spiritual formation, ministry formation, and strategic formation:

1. *Spiritual Formation (Character)* – emphasis on developing intimacy with God and integrity
2. *Ministry [Leadership] Formation (Competencies)*  – emphasis on identifying and developing gift mix (spiritual gifts, natural abilities, and acquired skills)
3. *Strategic Formation* *(Calling)* – emphasis on understanding and developing God’s call and unique philosophy of ministry, and being intentional about accomplishing it

**Strategic Formation**

*Strategic Formation* *(Calling)* – emphasis on understanding and developing God’s call and unique philosophy of ministry, and being intentional about accomplishing it. Strategic formation is critical for our understanding and fulfillment of personal and leadership purposes. George Barna (*Leaders on Leadership*) states that we must: “Understand that to be a Christian leader, the vision towards which you lead people must be a vision God gives you” (p. 47). We must learn to lead out of a sense (“mental portrait”) of God’s purposes for our lives and those we serve and lead.

**Calling**

HenryBlackaby (*Called and* accountable)is very helpful in his description of a “personal” sense of calling (Unit 2: What is a Call?). He says that:

1. We are called to a relationship with God.

2. We are called to personal and corporate redemption.

3. We are called to participate in mission.

4. God initiates the call.

5. The call is to obedience.

Our specific “personal” call will come out of and from within this general context. A helpful definition of calling (or what J. Robert Clinton calls “destiny”) is:

“an inner conviction arising from an experience or a series of experiences

in which there is a growing sense of awareness that God has His hand on a

leader in a special way for special purposes” (J. Robert Clinton, *Clinton’s*

*Biblical Leadership Commentary*, p. 371).

This is similar to Barna’s description of vision as a “mental portrait” of “God’s preferred future.” How, then do we get from vision to implementation?

Clinton is helpful here. He has developed a “destiny processing” pattern (*Clinton’s Biblical Leadership* Commentary, p. 372) that involves the following steps:

Stage 1- preparation

Stage 2 - unfolding revelation

Stage 3 – increasing confirmation

Stage 4 - fulfillment

Again, remember that these stages are contingent upon our obedience, growth, and maturity. Also, remember how spiritual formation (Character), leadership formation (Competencies), and strategic formation (Calling) are integrated as we move toward fulfillment (Clinton calls this “convergence”) and the “much fruit” promised to those who “abide in Christ” (John 15: 5-8) and endure God’s pruning.

**Focused Living**

As we gain insights into our personal calling, we need to become more and more intentional in developing our character, gift mix, and pursuing our destiny. This will involve learning how to hear the voice of God through the Bible and personal revelation (that never contradicts the clear teaching in the Bible) and obedience. Over time, you will learn to say “no” to secondary issues ao that you can say “yes” to primary ones. This is called focused living and is a primary characteristic of those who finishe well in life and leadership.