

KNOW YOURSELF

Successful churches need two elements. They need a **leadership gift** and a **teaching gift** – these two together give balance and if the church is to excel then both need to be done well. *Theological grounding* - knowing the truth about God - is essential for a teaching gift, while to develop as a leader it's vital to *know yourself!*

I'm a person who gives 100% to what I do – the end of each day sees me physically drained. I'm not only committed, I'm intense (so I'm told!) So when in my early twenties I was at a meeting in Manchester and heard a guy speaking from the call of God to Isaiah and Jeremiah, I went to him after the meeting and told him, 'I felt God call me today.' Some time later Gerald Coates came to the church and picked me out from among the elders. He prophesied that I would be doing what he was doing in about 10 years' time. He told me I would have a platform ministry. Doug McBain also prophesied that I would be involved in evangelism. The challenge of all that was how to handle big prophetic statements about my life – **character will be crucial at this point**. But the value of outside confirmation by recognized leaders gives inner confidence to believe that God has called you to lead. Then when the internal struggles come – standing before the people thinking, 'Can I do this? Can I lead this people through, for example, a massive building project?' – at that moment those external encouragements can help. Prophetic words of this type can give you backbone in such a situation. *But you also have to learn that you can't do it all yourself!*

Character

I learned early on the **importance of developing character along with gifting**. When I was leading the youth work, one of the guys on the team was brilliant with the young people. Have you ever met one of those? It doesn't matter what age they are – they just connect with young people and young people love them! They might have a bit of the Peter Pan about them as this guy did – he was the most gifted youth worker on my team. *My problem was that I did not know from week to week what emotional state he would be in when he turned up!* If he was on a good week – an emotional high – he would be an inspiration and all the youngsters would gravitate to him. The next week he would be at the back of the meeting feeling sorry for himself. I could not depend on him. *It didn't take long to realise that the dependable (but not so inspirational) youth worker bore more fruit.* Before too long one of the elders and I had a talk with the guy with the wide swing on his emotional pendulum and challenged him about this aspect of his character. Initially unwilling to acknowledge the reality of how he was, before our time together was over he asked for help.

If your character and gifting develop at different rates you will find yourself over-exposed. The gift opens up opportunities for you but your character cannot support your skill and will lead to trouble. In fact – your character needs to be ahead of your gifting. One of my prayers is, 'Lord, please make sure that my character is up to speed!' and 'Lord, don't let me get myself into a position beyond my character and gifting.' I've seen that happen to people – they get badly burned and either withdraw completely from ministry or the setback costs years, sometimes decades, of fruitful work.

Essential elements

Character first! This is vital. But **competence** and **chemistry** are other important issues. *Competence* – when looking at potential new members for my

team I want someone who can do the job well and *chemistry* – how will this person fit, both with me and the rest of the team?

How does this work practically? Here's an example from a few years' back. I've got a growing church, I've got a very good team and then **Terry Virgo** said to me over a meal, '**Mick Taylor** is thinking about a move. You're looking for an Ephesians 4 teacher on your team – are you interested?' I said, 'No! I can't afford him. I've got a big building debt.' But I meet him. Here is an experienced pastor who has led his own church and who has then been an elder at Bracknell for 11 years. He has lectured at Spurgeon's College and knows some Greek and Hebrew. He's obviously competent! *But I'm also looking for chemistry. Do I connect with him? And more importantly, will he connect with my team?* He could come in with his gifts - but if he messes up my team, he's no good to any of us! Some years down the line now I can report that he slotted in smoothly – one of the easiest transitions in integrating a new team member that I can recall!

Character is of prime importance – look at 1 Tim 3:1-13 and Titus 1: 1 – 9. Through these passages – a summary of the qualifications for elders, overseers and deacons – the emphasis is not on gifting. **Good reputation, self-controlled, hospitable, open-hearted, able to teach** (there's the reference to gifting – in the middle of the rest of the character requirements!), **not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money and not a recent convert**. These are the criteria. And leadership at home is also included – *how the leader is with his wife and children matters*.

Personality and style

Personality comes after character in importance but can have an important bearing on your level of self-awareness.

Knowing if you are an internal or external processor will be of help to you and you need to know how others tick with this issue, too. An **external processor** deals with information by **talking it out**. **Internal processors** on the other hand **sit quietly and think about things and come back with a well-thought out, cohesive plan**. Guess which I am! If you're part of my team I could come out with something that sounds like my conclusions on a particular topic – especially as I'm a very persuasive leader and as team leader I have a measure of authority that goes with that! However it's probably just me thinking aloud and my team get that now – most of the time!

And what about **leadership styles**? *Authoritarian, persuasive, consultative, democratic and laissez-faire* – each of these might be appropriate in different settings – or inappropriate! In a critical situation like a fire, you don't want democratic leadership. ('Let's have a meeting about this – shall we leave the building? Let's vote on that!') My leadership style is *persuasive*. I pretend to be *consultative* but actually I'm not. In the context of my eldership team I'm at my most consultative but I'm definitely not *democratic*.

Character and personality – there's a difference! *And character is more to do with the fruits of the Spirit*.

Your History

Your history shapes you – often far more than you realise. *The path you have taken to get where you are will often define your thinking*. To be aware of these things is important; knowing the formative elements in your development is an important part of your self-knowledge.

If you want to know yourself, know your history. A trivial but revealing example of this for me would be what happened when Deb and I got married - with the wedding gift list. Deb and her Mum compiled the list - I stayed well clear of the process until it was nearly done and Deb suggested that I had a look to see if there was anything I wanted to add. I went through it and - in all seriousness - said to Deb, 'Where's the trolley?'

'Trolley? What trolley? What do you want a trolley for?'

'The one that sits in the kitchen, where we put the newspapers so we know where they are when we want them. And when we have a family 'do' or Sunday tea, the trolley comes out to the living room with the tea and sandwiches...'

My Mum had a trolley in her kitchen and guess what, so did my Nana! And when we went to visit and had tea - out would come the trolley! (Anyone relating to this story?) So of *course* I asked, 'Where's the trolley?'

Deb said to me, quite firmly - more firmly than I thought necessary, really, 'We are *never* having a trolley in our house.' Well, now we have a sort of IKEA thing - but that's another story!

Your upbringing, your history shapes you! *Sometimes you're in reaction to it; sometimes it's a model that you use for reference.* I would suggest that as you become older your history impacts you more and more - I'm certainly finding this! Into your own adulthood and marriage you bring your own upbringing and the examples of your parents - good and bad.

Spiritual Gifts

In my early development as a leader, when I looked at the list in Ephesians 4, I didn't know what my gift was. I was mission-focused - did that make me an evangelist? I used to prophesy regularly in our meetings - did that mean I was a prophet? I looked after a team of people - was I a pastor? What about teaching?

I was part of a Baptist church that joined *Newfrontiers* - I had no framework of the apostolic ministry as we had been an autonomous local church now connected with a trans-local Ephesians 4 ministry. At that time there was a lot of teaching around this subject which came out of this passage from the Bible. This was primarily because we were seeking to re-establish and restore this ministry structure throughout the church and the movement. Apart from Ephesians 4, we also spent time in Rom 12:3 - 8 and 1 Cor 12:27 - 31.

From Rom 12 I learned that it was **not down to my natural ability but was the grace of God!** That took some pressure off me as a leader - I realised that the worship I was leading was not down to my leadership primarily but His grace! And from the 1 Corinthians passage I learned again **the importance of the primacy of love as your motive** in serving and exercising gifts.

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