

# Toward a Working Model of Transformational Leadership

Mark W. McCloskey

*Model.* A model presents a *working picture* or conceptualization of the relationships (law driven interactions) between and among variables (constructs) that characterize a complex system (a theory). Models serve theory by providing a picture of how the theory works in real life. Theories *describe* and *explain* while models *picture* and *represent*. A model of transformational leadership will help us picture *what's happening* with respect to the interaction between critical variables in the leadership equation.

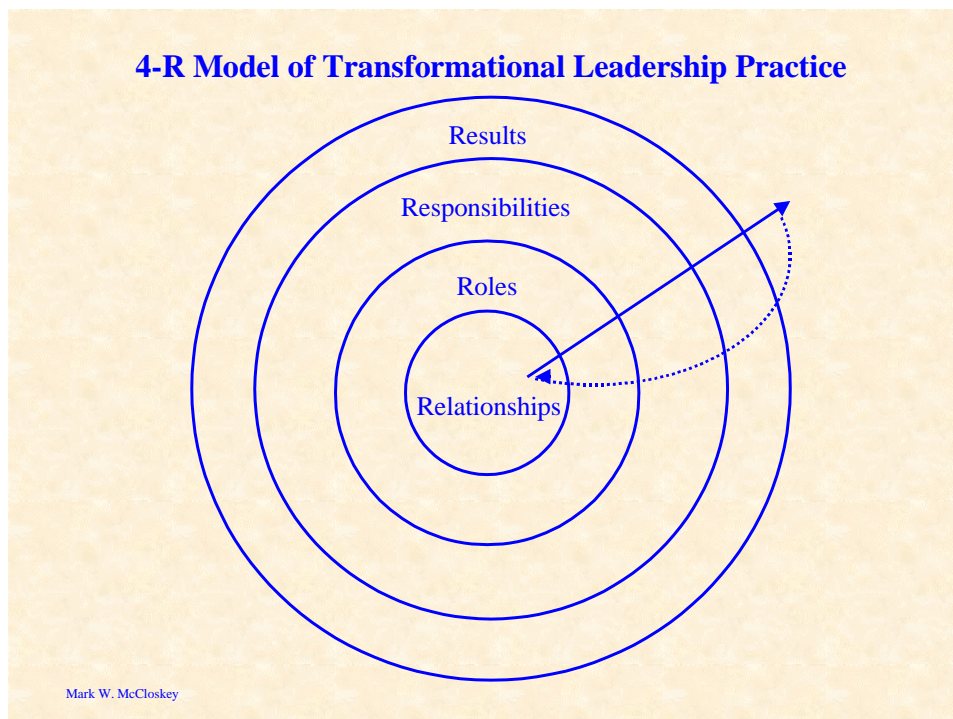
In simple language a model is a map, or better a road map. Like a road map, a model helps us more clearly envision and thus more effectively navigate unfamiliar terrain. Like roadmaps, models picture the crucial interrelationships, the intersection of critical factors like major roads and rivers along our journey. In our case, a working model of transformational leadership pictures *the interplay of critical variables in the process of transformational leadership as it is expressed in the context of a missional community*.

*The Limitations of Models.* No theory is perfect, and so no model is sufficiently accurate or comprehensive to picture *reality as it really is*. Road maps are helpful, but maps are not reality. Road maps highlight the relationship between features of the terrain like the location of rivers, the intersection of roads, and the distance between towns. Maps and models, if they are to be helpful at all, are over-simplifications of a reality too big and complex to accurately and fully envision.

So, of necessity and in the name of simplicity, models leave out many variables. If every possible variable were included, a working model of transformational leadership would be so cumbersome that it would not offer a clear picture of how leadership works. A good model is like a good road map. It simplifies without being leading astray. It distills without distorting the landscape.

By definition, the very simplicity that makes models (or maps) worth having will of necessity distort the reality the model is attempting to picture. Reality won't, can't be poured into the mold called for by the model. Reality puts enormous pressure on a model and models leak under this pressure. Real life will always have the final say. So, while models are helpful, they should be held loosely knowing that they only *approximate reality as it really is*.

It is in this spirit of humility that I offer the 4-R Model of Transformational Leadership.



Based on biblical theology and transformational theory, the 4-R Model identifies four critical leadership variables. The 4-R Model pictures transformational leadership as (1) beginning with our **Relationships**, (2) overflowing into community leadership **Roles**, (3) calling upon the leader to exercise specific leadership **Responsibilities** and (4) eventually producing contextually defined **Results**.

## RELATIONSHIPS

As you will note, *Relationships* is figuratively and literally the heart of the Model, indicating that transformational leadership is at its vital core a spiritual, other-oriented endeavor. The 4-R Model assumes that if we want to understand how the process of leadership works, we must begin with the person doing the leading. This assumption is derived from biblical theology as well as transformational theory. Leadership, especially spiritual leadership is an expression of *who* we are, or better put from a biblical perspective, *Whose* we are.

For better or worse, the sustained effectiveness of every leadership endeavor, encounter or engagement depends on the spiritual and personal capacity of the leader. The rigors of transformational servant leadership place stringent demands on the spiritual maturity, passion, wisdom, integrity and well being of the leader. It takes a whole, holy and healthy person to translate his or her noble aspirations into effective community action.

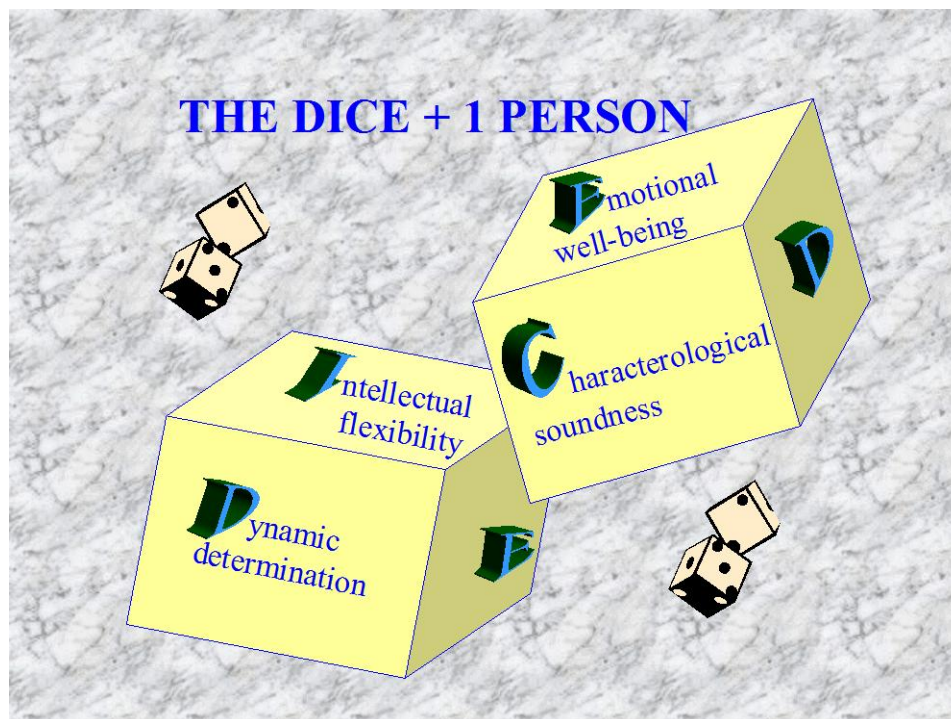
But it is not theologically or theoretically sufficient that our Model begin with an understanding of “the person alone.” Not even a holistic understanding of the individual will suffice. It is theologically inaccurate and conceptually inadequate to suggest that a sole person, in any way, shape or form exists or functions in a state of splendid isolation, especially in the arena of leadership practice. Consequently, even for the purpose of analysis, the 4-R Model will not consider “the person standing alone” as a critical leadership factor.

Each of us live, serve and lead in a perpetual state of community oriented interaction. Our partnerships touch us and transform us, for better or worse, to the very core of our being. *Relationships* define us, shaping our hearts and enhancing (or diminishing) our capacity to serve and lead in the community. So, both transformational theory and biblical theology insist that the first critical variable of a leadership Model be the broader category of *Relationships*, or in other words, *the person in the process of partnership*.



*The Divine Human Partnership.* While transformational theory is silent on this point, a biblical theology of leadership affirms that a *divine-human partnership* is the critical and foundational partnership from which all service and leadership is driven and sustained. The leader’s primary partnership is with the living God through His Son Jesus, who transforms the leader from the inside out and gives the leader the capacity to serve as His agent of divine transformation in the community and beyond. This divine-human partnership is the headwaters of authentic, biblical transformational leadership. This

Relationship is the reservoir out of which all matters of Kingdom leadership flow. This partnership is the sustaining source of the health and trajectory of our heart. In this partnership the seeds of essential, personal leadership capacity are planted, watered and grow. Simply put effective and sustained transformational leadership is made possible only as the leader is caught up in a transforming partnership with Jesus. *Whose* we are shapes *who* we are and creates in us the capacity for relating in a transformational manner with other partners in Jesus' transformational community.



The DICE + 1 configuration depicts the *essential capacities* of the leader, the *critical*, *foundational*, and *indispensable* factors which make possible leadership attitudes and behaviors.

*Capacity* is the ability to produce and sustain. Capacity is the power to hold something, to accommodate something, to absorb something. In the DICE + 1 configuration, leadership attitudes and behaviors are produced and sustained. These factors are that which accommodate and absorb the challenges of leading. So, leadership capacities are that which gives the leader sufficient power and prowess to in actuality lead well over time.

The DICE + 1 factors are the concentrated form, the essence, the juice of leadership. If we could freeze dry or distill an effective leader, this is what we would end up with. Without these, there is simply no leadership. You may have other things--management, influence, giftedness--but you will not have leadership.

**Dynamic Determination.** This leadership capacity has been called by a variety of names. Drive, initiative, dedication, persistence, ascendance, assertiveness, ambition, aspiration, steadfastness and agency. Dynamic Determination is purposeful and passionate engagement with one's world, relationships, and opportunities for service. It is the resourceful and persistent pursuit of one's vision, mission, goals and objectives, often in the face of stubborn obstacles and overwhelming challenges.

*Home Analogy.* Is your home hooked up to a fresh and powerful source of life and energy? Does your house have a power source--electricity--and a source of pure water? Do rivers of living water run through your life (John 7:37-39).

*The Christian Advantage.* Dynamic determination is the release of God's supernatural power, His "dunamis" in and through our lives. It is the exercise of agency in the Name of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is about biblical long-suffering; about being undeterred by discouragement; about not growing weary and losing heart.

*The Leadership Imperative.* Leadership, by definition thrusts the leader into the "deep end of the pool." Along the "extra mile of leadership", leaders face a steady diet of challenges, obstacles, risk, failure and disappointment. The community looks to its leaders to face these and help others get through them. Leaders have to face the tough facts and figure out how to keep going. Leaders can't quit.

**Intellectual Flex-ability.** Intellectual Flex-ability is the capacity to function with effectiveness in multiple and complex cognitive paradigms and cultural frameworks. It is one's capacity for pursuing, obtaining, and effectively processing large amounts of data. This implies the conceptual ability to see how the data fits with the parts, how the parts fit with the whole, and how one's own "embeddedness" in the world affects one's perception of the data, parts and whole. Simply put, it is the ability to see patterns and meaning in the chaos of data and experience, often beyond the blinders of our personal assumptions and experience

*The Christian Advantage.* The Christian advantage is God's invitation to embrace His Word and the wisdom in it, and thus see the whole of His world. "The highest wisdom has but one science--the science of the whole--the science explaining the whole creation and man's place in it" (Tolstoy, War and Peace, chapter 2). "How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all" (Psalm 104:24).

*Home Analogy.* Does your home have a southern exposure and plenty of windows, allowing in light and fresh air? Is it open and airy or dark and closed off? Is the home well ventilated? How is your view of the rest of the world? What is the horizon of your view from your windows? Is your home well situated on the landscape? Does it have enough windows to take in the view from all directions? While primary colors, including black and white are appropriately embraced as part of the color scheme, is there is richness of diversity in this house? Do shades of color, diverse materials, unique shapes blend into a beautiful whole?

*The Leadership Imperative.* The intellectually flex-able leader possesses the capacity to see the world, as it really is, a complex, dynamic system of interrelationships between people and people, people and groups, and groups and groups. This capacity is crucial if the leader is to properly identify complex problems and creatively solve them by designing long-term strategies. This capacity is expressed in two ways.

*The Ethnographic Heart.* As the Chinese proverb says, ninety percent of what we see lies behind our own eyes. The transformational leader possesses a conceptual, theoretical, and practical understanding of the processes, which connect them in meaningful ways to individuals and cultures other than their own. The task of ethnography is to access and understand the features and patterns of life of a particular culture or subculture and, for followers of Jesus, to connect these features and patterns in meaningful ways with the word of God and Kingdom life.

*The Systems Mind.* The leader understands the complex and integrated nature of the Kingdom enterprise as a whole and dynamic organism. The transformational leader appreciates the dynamics of the change process, both personal and organizational, as it relates to the organization as a system. “No change can be made in one facet of the organization without effecting another facet of the organization”. In addition, the leader appreciates the fact that changes in systems effect the morale and performance of employees and volunteers. The ramifications of systems thinking on policy decisions, human resource decisions, the use of various technologies, strategy formulation, decision-making and problem- solving are understood and appreciated.

**Characterological Soundness.** Character is the relational structure of our personhood as beings created in God’s image. Because we are created in His image, we are designed to relate and connect to one another as integrated, whole and holy beings. Specifically, character is our capacity to live in healthy and holy ways in and for the people and communities we serve.

Character is the structural integrity of a person. It is one’s “capacity for congruity” between private and public life, motivation and action, and word and deed. Our character is that which defines us as integrated, whole, and holy individuals. Soundness of character speaks of how well we are glued together in our inner person and thus defines our capacity to love, take responsibility for our lives, and contribute to others.

*The Christian Advantage.* The believer has the power of the Holy Spirit, the sanctification process to reconstruct our inner person according to the image of Jesus Christ.

*The Home Analogy.* Does your home have structural integrity? Is the construction of your home sound not only in the material used to build it, but also in its architectural design? Is the foundation of your home secure? Or, do you live in a house of straw? A deck of cards? Is your home built on sand or rock?

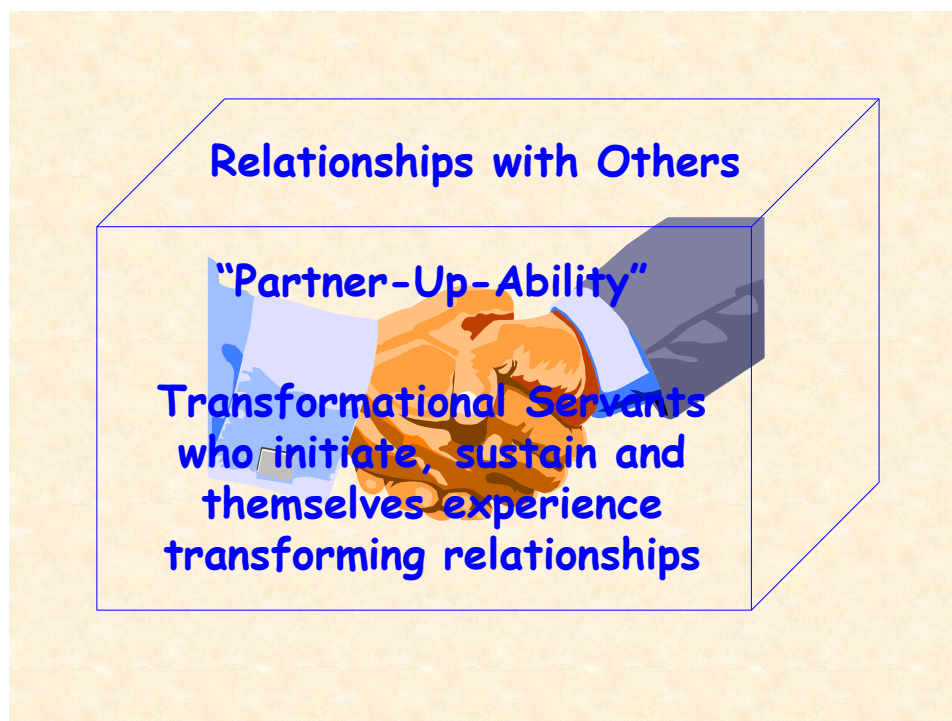
*Leadership Imperative.* The transformational leader is an effective, self-conscious agent of change, recognizing the future impact of his or her present attitude and conduct on the success of the community. Accordingly, he or she lives a life that models the reality of godly transformation, in attitude, word and deed, at a personal, interpersonal and community level. The leader recognizes the link between one's private world and public effectiveness, holding themselves accountable to the highest standards of conduct. The leader manifests essential congruity between word and deed, and vision and daily life, such that his or her lifestyle is a living, authentic witness to the godly change they envision and pursue.

**Emotional Well Being.** Emotional well being is based on an abiding sense of contentedness and security flowing from deep knowledge of our acceptance and worth. As such, it comes not from "without", but from "within". Emotional well being is expressed in the capacity to live contentedly in the midst of life's stress and disappointments. It is manifested in emotional hardiness and personal "climate control" e.g., the effective monitoring and controlling of one's moods, emotional "climate" and "weather patterns".

*The Christian Advantage.* Emotional well being is demonstrated in other-centeredness. In Christ, and by the grace of God, the leader with emotional well being has substantially addressed and settled issues of esteem, identity and power such that he or she is capable of focusing on the needs and concerns of others. Emotionally healthy leaders are givers, not takers. Because the emotionally healthy leader leads from a heart that is alive in Christ, full of grace and truth, they have something of great value to give away. This inclination toward other-centeredness says it all in terms of our ability to lead over the long term with the best interests of others in mind.

*Home Analogy.* Is your home a warm and inviting place? What is the air like? What is the atmosphere in the home? The aroma? Is there apple pie in the oven? What are the weather patterns inside? Is it warm and sunny or dark and cold? Is your home a pleasant place to visit? Do you enjoy living there?

*Leadership Imperative.* Leaders, for better or worse, create and sustain the emotional climate of the community.



The DICE capacities are called forth as the transformational servant enters into a variety of types and levels of healthy Kingdom partnerships (personal and organizational, cross-cultural and multi-cultural) to further the Kingdom vision.

*The DICE + 1 Package.* “My premise is that leadership is not exceptional (some are born with it), but the natural expression of the fully functional personality. As Warren Bennis put it, “the process of becoming a leader is much the same as becoming an integrated human being” (John Thompson, (1992) *New Traditions in Business: Spirit and Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Berrett-Koehler Publisher, San Francisco).

The 4-R Model assumes that transformational leadership at its most essential level is a leader-follower engagement that is best understood as a *person in a process of both human and divine transformational partnership*

*Leadership Implications.* “Partner-up-ability” is the primary Kingdom community building capacity, and thus the ultimate requirement of transformational servant leadership. A transformational partnership is a long-term covenant relationship--not a short-term contractual strategy or one time transaction. Transformational partnerships are an expression of covenantal loyalty, forged in shared values and vision and expressed in acts of mutual trust and cooperation.

## ROLES



*Roles.* This is the critical variable of community place or *Roles*. Transformational theory calls for a transformational process *among* and *between* partners, and assumes that these partners live together *in community*. Transformational servant leadership is not a solo event, but *a missional community process*. So, the leader-follower engagement, the *Relationships* at the heart of the model must be pictured as they are expressed in a broader community context. The 4-R Model suggests four distinct and critical community contexts, each of which is a leadership *Role* (see diagram).

Each of the *Roles* is embedded in a quadrant or what I call a *critical corner of the missional community*. The 4-R Model pictures leadership as it is effectively practiced in a missional community. So, it depicts the leader as necessarily shaping his or her leadership contribution (the focus of his or her time and energy) such that it is congruent with the desired *missional shape* of the community he or she serves. In other words, there is a critical connection between the leader's focus (what aspects of community life get the leader's attention), the release of the community's resources (what aspects of community life merit its investment of time, energy and dollars) and the effectiveness with which the community pursues its mission.

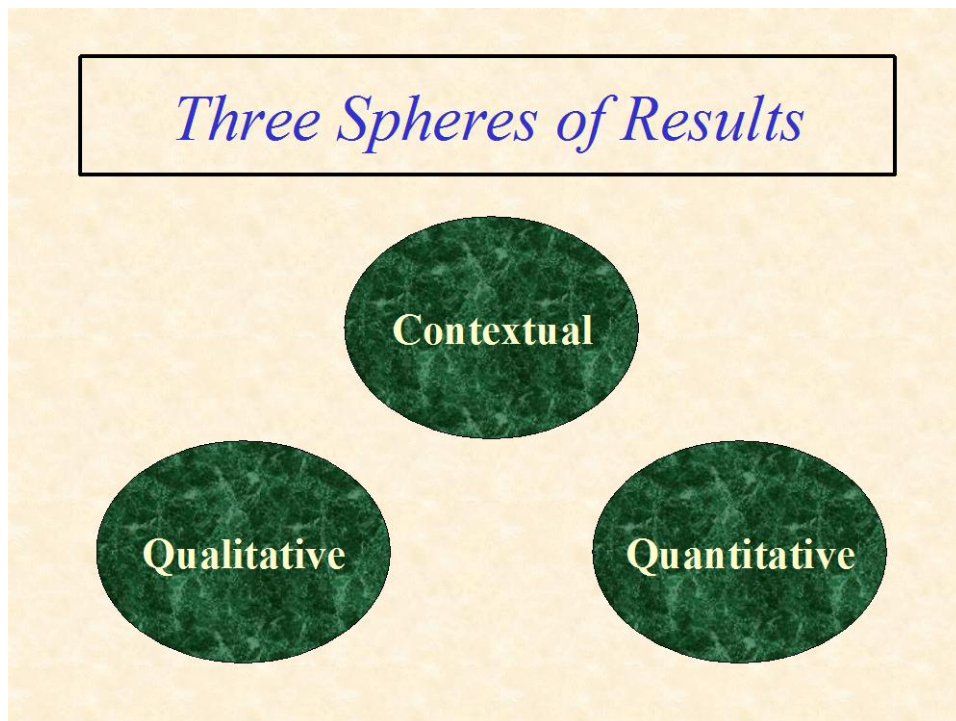
## RESPONSIBILITIES



*Responsibilities* depict the *transformational leadership process*. *Responsibilities* are a sequence of specific leadership oriented actions or behaviors--what a leader *does*. This category of the Model is not meant as a catchall to list every last thing *some leaders might* do. Rather, it depicts the *essential things every transformational leader must do*. In the spirit of a simple and comprehensive working Model, I offer four *Responsibilities every transformational leader must do if they aspire to lead well over time in a missional community context*. They are (1) Vision Development and Communication (Vision Casting), (2) Strategy Development and Implementation (Strategy Formulating), (3) Aligning of personnel, structures, systems and resources with the vision and strategy (Aligning), and (4) Motivating people in the face of obstacles and discouragement (Motivating).

## RESULTS

*Results*. The 4-R Model assumes that it is a leadership necessity to monitor and evaluate the progress of the community along the leadership journey. So, the *Results* component asks the transformational servant to ask and keep asking tough questions of themselves and the community. What is happening? Why? Are we seeing the outcomes we prayed for and invested in? Is our purpose being fulfilled? Our mission achieved? Our vision realized? What is going well? Not so well? How can we improve?



*Results* depict categories of outcomes the community and its leaders view as important given the specific context of the community, its purpose, mission, vision and values. In this sense, *Results* as depicted by the 4-R Model are contextually defined. It is important to note that Results include both quantitative and qualitative outcomes. In other words, Results may be reflected in both numbers and quality of outcomes.

From the standpoint of biblical theology, *Results* is a function of Kingdom stewardship. *Results* address the question, “How does God want to use our community investment of Kingdom resources? What Kingdom outcomes does He want us to pray for and invest in?” The *Result* category calls upon the leader and the entire community to cultivate a spirit of healthy self-evaluation, critical reflection and radical readiness (teachability) to listen to God, repent, adjust and try new things.

### **SUMMARY**

The logic of the 4-R Model is stated as follows. If we want to understand transformational leadership, to picture how it works, we must account for the *critical leadership variables* and properly relate them to each other. We must begin with the *person in partnership* or the *Relationships* component. The transformational leader must “be the right person” and “be in right relationship”, a transformational relationship with God that flows into our partnership with others.

So, *Relationships* must be pictured at the center of the 4-R Model signifying it is the heart, the vital core and sustaining source of all authentically transformational leadership.

This honors both transformational theory and the biblical assumption that leadership is a divinely initiated and sustained, relational, community process. Additionally, it makes the point that the effective functioning of the other three critical components of the Model (*Roles, Responsibilities and Results*) are dependent on the healthy functioning of *Relationships*.

The logic and flow of the 4-R Model suggests the following. (1) When the right person in partnership (*Relationships*), (2) shows up in the right community places (*Roles*) and (3) does the right process (*Responsibilities*), (4) *Results* (products) will mark the collective progress of the missional community on its journey to the future. While the Model does not promise *Results* as a neat cause and effect package, a pattern of transformation on a personal and community level, shaped by the vision and values of the community will emerge over time.

## **POSSIBLE USES FOR THE 4-R MODEL**

*To Clearly Picture Critical Leadership Factors.* The 4-R Model identifies the critical components of transformational leadership while distinguishing these from merely important, interesting or idiosyncratic factors. It does so as simply as possible (it offers a minimum number of critical variables in the spirit of the law of parsimony) while being as comprehensive as necessary.

*To Picture What Might Be Happening.* The 4-R Model proposes causal pathways, suggests possible cause and effect relationships, and probable interrelationships between critical leadership factors. Through the lens of the Model we can look into leadership situations and assess what is happening or not happening and why, as a leader attempts to take others on a journey to a new and better place.

*To Serve as a Developmental Map for our Personal and Collective Leadership Journey.* With the help of the Model, the critical attitudes and behaviors of effective leadership can be identified and assessed on a personal and community level. The 4-R Model can assist individuals in evaluating and improving their leadership.