

International Institute of Christian Ministries

LCL 101

***Christian Leadership
Principles and
Theory***

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Principles of Christian Leadership

Introduction: Leadership in the Context of the Christian Church

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Summary: The Christian Trade Mark of Unity

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"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage;
do not be afraid, nor be dismayed,
for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:9

It was in faith--faith in God's love and care--that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God. (DA 336.1)

Introduction: Leadership in the Context of the Christian Church

Leading God's church is indeed a fascinating challenge. Being a Christian leader one has the opportunity of shaping the development of the church, of giving a certain direction to its growth and to decisively influence the atmosphere people experience in the church. And, at the same time it means that God and the church are ready to invest a great amount of trust in the leader who assumes responsibility for his God given vision and its implementation in the local church.

Church leadership is a privilege granted to some of Christ's followers in the context of God's church we identify with. Sure, leadership is at least as complex as the church itself, but the burden, the stress, the pain and the trembling connected to leadership fade in the light of the redemptive initiative of God in our lives. Many things are pleasant and desirable in life, but being a co-worker with Christ for a better life of the surrounding people, in its immanent as well as in its transcendent dimension, is the most high distinction possible. Putting God first in life can produce lasting happiness and gives new perspectives to our life as well as to the life of our churches.

Defining Christian Leadership

Leadership is an art. In many jobs skills are trained to be applied whenever certain situations occur. Leadership is different: because it is dealing with a permanently changing future, it needs to continuously adapt to new contexts.

Leadership, therefore, is more than just managing the church. "Make no mistake about it: management is not leadership. Teaching is not leadership. Counseling is not leadership. These other disciplines are no less valuable than leadership, but they must not be confused with or substituted for leadership." (Barna, 1997, 28)

The true leader is looking toward the future. He is a person with charisma, able to motivate people toward a common goal. "A leader is one who mobilizes;

one whose focus is influencing people; a person who is goal driven; someone who has an orientation in common with those who rely upon him for leadership; and someone who has people willing to follow him." (Barna, 1997, 23)

So, what is Christian leadership after all? It is the breakthrough of a leading person into new, unknown realms of the future, motivating church members and friends to follow this better way.

Principles of Christian Leadership

Successful Christian leadership depends on the understanding and implementation of Bible based principles. Working methods and effective skills are the result of this.

Jesus himself sets the frame of Christian leadership, when He says: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." John 15:5

An inspired word remarks, that leadership "requires the closest attention, care, and mental labor. It requires the exercise of sound judgment and wisdom. It requires self-denial, a whole heart, and a firm will to push matters through. In that important position God will have a man to venture, to risk something; to move out firmly for the right, whatever may be the consequences; to battle against obstacles, and waver not, even though life be at stake. (Testimonies, Vol. 1, p. 320)

Leadership is a real challenge since it demands a level of highest performance. And because it involves the very different aspects of life it becomes clear, that successful leadership is only possible, if somebody is ready for commitment of the whole life to this task. So being a leader implies no less than to invest one's own life for Christ and His mission.

There are many important elements of Christian leadership, which could result in an almost endless list. During this course we will concentrate on just a few important principles of Christian leadership. Within this frame we will try to deal also with other indispensable elements of this task with the knowledge, that this is never exhaustive and that the development of church-leader-persons is an lifelong process.

In this textbook choices have been made to simplify the complex of principles and to make them applicable. At the same time, secondary skills, which can easily be learned in another setting, have been left out, since there is a multitude of literature on these topics, so that everybody has the opportunity to improve the needed skills by the assistance of these books or seminars.

In this course the spiritual, the transcendent aspect, will receive a very strong

emphasis. It is because of the theme, because Christian leadership has always to do with Christ's redeeming attitude and action, that it needs to find its expression in the church's life, and it is presented this way, because of the necessity to avoid a mechanic, a materialistic and an exclusive immanent view of leadership.

Christian leadership in an Adventist context means more than leadership in a general sense: It means that the task, the responsibility, the content and the goal of leadership - all these elements need to be received like a gift donated by the living God through His Word to each individual leading God's church, and it means that the ultimate responsibility is toward God himself. As the Bible says: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Acts 20:28

Christian Leadership starts, works and ends with prayer for God's guidance. Let us pray that God may use us as successful co-workers and friends in the high-purpose-project of human redemption from the curse of sin toward a bright future.

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Unit 1: The Spiritual Dimension in Christian Leadership

1.1 The Priority of Faith in Christian Leadership

„But without faith it is impossible to please Him,
for he who comes to God must believe that He is,
and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.“
Hebrew 11:6

“The path of men who are placed as leaders is not an easy one. But they are to see in every difficulty a call to prayer. Never are they to fail of consulting the great Source of all wisdom. Strengthened and enlightened by the Master Worker, they will be enabled to stand firm against unholy influences and to discern right from wrong, good from evil. They will approve that which God approves, and will strive earnestly against the introduction of wrong principles into His cause. (Prophets and Kings, pp. 30, 31)

Faith is the “core business” of a church. Good relationships, feeling at home and a warm atmosphere are very important in church ministry, but these never can be the “raison d’être” of the church. It is the church’s task to proclaim the Gospel, to call to faith, and to facilitate its members’ living in faith. Church leadership is primarily an act of faith. And it is at the same time the goal, the motivation, and the content of the church’s life. Faith is the fundament on which all planning and all activity of the church needs to be based.

The role of the church is a unique one. In the context of postmodernism there is hardly another place able to offer people an environment favorable to the establishment of bridges between humans and God. The church’s task is to give people an opportunity to develop faith in a secularized world. The church needs to help people to discover the relevance of faith for the real life, and to develop a Christian-Biblical lifestyle applicable to every day’s life.

Many of the recent books on leadership deal extensively with topics like: change, management, vision and team-spirit. Unfortunately only very few even just address this important issue: the role and the quality of faith in the context of Christian leadership. But exactly this needed, because “the postmodern does not know this common presupposition [of faith]. The individualism and pluralism of our society determined, that only private and subjective truths get recognized, having all the same right of existence.” (Knoblauch, Marquardt 1999, 79.80) Contrasting this, the redemptive message proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Lord of life, is an absolute, objective and universally valid truth.

Faith is a better source than often anticipated. “When we speak about the main concern of the Bible, we address at the same time the most moving theme of

our time... As Christians we cannot do a better favor to the world, than to stay very faithful with our core-competence, the core-competence of reconciliation of the world through Jesus Christ." (Knoblauch, Marquardt 1999, 81)

But what is this faith we are speaking about? For a church to live and to grow it is necessary to have a redemptive and time relevant faith, a faith that becomes evident in everyday's life. (Rev. 2:19) More than being just a construction in the mind of people, faith is a matter of relationship. Speaking of faith the New Testament means a relationship of confidence between human beings and God (John 14:1). It is trust toward a redeeming God and it is trust to be invested in dealing with the people we are working for.

That is why the priority of faith is a *must* in church leadership. It seems that a great part of the problems in the church occur as a result of distrust. This is why we are called to seed the seeds of trust in the church, in the world and in all our relationships. The priority of faith results from the Christ-centeredness of the Biblical understanding of redemption based on a living faith visible in life. There is no other way for Christian leadership: A church leader needs to be a person of deep-rooted faith.

More than a secular approach to leadership, Christian leadership focuses on the spiritual perspective of doing things in the church. Leadership skills are necessary, psychological and sociological understanding may be helpful for leadership, but a faithful approach, deeply trusting God and His Word will really help to do "spiritual things spiritually." (1 Cor. 2:13.14)

In the following there will be presented some of the constitutive elements of a faith-oriented approach to leadership in the church:

1.1.1 Love and Surrender to Jesus Christ

Being a Christian leader means to spread an air of love and surrender toward our saviour, Jesus Christ. It means, that all our activity will be based on a Christ-centered belief and a personal relationship with Him being demonstrated by the leader as well as by all the other responsible persons in the church.

1.1.2 A Deep Respect for the Authority of God

Being a Christian leader means to spread a deep respect for the authority of God revealed in His Word. God's revelation to human beings is found most sharply in the Holy Scripture. Only a respectful and obedient attitude towards the Bible as the revelation of God's will can shape a society-relevant and yet, at the same time society-critical church, as a real, better alternative in the world we live.

1.1.3 Identification With the Community of Faith

Being a Christian leader means to identify oneself with the church that follows more closely God's guiding Word. Regarding the establishment of the early Christian church, the New Testament clearly points out, that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit guided people for the establishment of the church and in spite of human imperfection it is still His church, because the "head of the church is Christ" (Eph. 5:23).

1.1.4 A Favorable Atmosphere for a Christian-Adventist Lifestyle

Being a Christian leader means also to create a favorable atmosphere for a Christian lifestyle among the church members . A leader can create an ambience that will make people feel good with their alternative lifestyle following God's Word according to their best understanding of it.

A church leader with a living relationship with God will find natural ways to promote the church's own spiritual development. *Faith is not an additive to church's life and business, but it is the very substance* church life will be made of, similar to wheat, being not just an additive, but the basic element bread is made of. Many people spend decade after decade in the church, many of them the whole life. They need permanent spiritual growth. This is the reason, why the spiritual development of the church is a continuous priority task. People want to grow; people can grow; people have to grow spiritually.

Living with God means to live by faith. And faith obviously changes lives. While secularized people orientate themselves to money, fun, career and consumption, a Christian expects more of his life: meaning, lasting values, love and confidence based relationships including money, fun, career and consumption. Faith opens the door to peace with God and to receiving His grace (Rom. 5:1.2) as well as coming to peace with others and with oneself.

Finally, the priority of faith is the basis of church leadership, because it determines the kind of church we are heading on: a Christ-centered, Bible-oriented, Spirit-driven church that is able to meet the simple as well as the complex needs of people in a globalized, but yet very simple human world. Technique may connect voices and images worldwide, but faith is able to connect the hearts of many believers in a worldwide church with each other and more than this: it is able to connect the heart with our loving and redeeming God.

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1.2 The Role of Mission in Christian Leadership

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all,
that I might win the more;...

Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.”
1 Corinthians 9:19.23

Lift up Jesus. Lift him up, the man of Calvary, with the voice of song and prayer. Seek earnestly to spread the gospel. Tell the precious story of God's love for man. In this work you will find a satisfaction that will last through the eternal ages. Christ has given us this work as our special charge, and he is the source of our wisdom and efficiency. (RH, July 11, 1899 par. 20)

A successful Christian leader needs to clearly know, what the church he leads, is heading for. There needs to be no doubt about the Biblical defined mission of the church. This needs to find a consensus in general as well as in the particular setting of the local church.

1.2.1 The Biblical Imperative of Mission

In Matthew 28:19.20 Jesus clearly defines what he is expecting of His church: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

This and many other passages of the New Testament make it clear that it is the mission of the church to spread the Gospel, the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ: To go - not to wait. To preach - not to be quiet. To teach - not to be inactive. Jesus emphasized that the church, and this means every single believer as a part of the church, has been called to be a co-worker with Him, working for the redemption of people lost in their sins.

Like in the business world, where each worker is committed to the “mission of the company”, no matter what kind of work he does, in the Christian church also every believer needs to be committed to this work with regard to this mission of seeking and finding the lost, of leading them to Jesus and nurturing them, accompanying them on the way into God's Kingdom.

1.2.2 The Biblical Method of Mission

The basic missionary principle established by Jesus Christ himself for the successful preaching of His kingdom was the factor of discipleship: a multiplication including every believer. (Matthew 28, 19:20) Jesus' concept of salvation is multiplication by calling each other, it is a proclamation from person to person. This

is why Jesus Christ sent His 12 and His 70 and all His disciples to make new disciples. "These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" (Mt 10:5-7.) "After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go." (Lk 10:1)

1.2.3 The Priority of Mission

It is true, there are many important things to do in the church. Caring for the persons facing hardship is important. Caring for our youth is vitally for the survival of the church. Caring for people in society is very Christian in its essence. But the most important in the life of the church is its missionary outreach. All other activities need to be related to this priority task of the church and every other activity has to be evaluated with regard to this fact.

In fact, the person, who has himself experienced God's redemption in life, will have no stronger desire, but to communicate to others, that there is hope in a hopeless world. He or she will communicate to any potential listener, what God has personally done for humans. Peter and John made the point: "But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19.20)

Maybe this insight will require some churches to rethink their whole being, their planning and activities. Maybe the worship service as well as all other structures have to be rearranged or perhaps "re-invented". But if a church agrees that faith is the most important thing for its existence, and that mission, as the communication of this faith has priority before all other church activities.

1.2.4 Mission is Growth "par excellence"

"Ministry is service given in the name of Christ, on behalf of or for the well-being of the church and its mission." (Lee 1989, 24.) The development of the church and the accomplishment of its mission are closely linked together and thus interdependent. So because the church is a system, all other areas of the church's work and life will be affected by the church's dealing with its mission.

The reason for mission is first a divine one, of course: because God loved us so much, that He gave His only Son to die for us, so that we can live. (John 3:16.). But second, it is also evident from a human point of view. Even for the development of the church, mission is a must. Having new people joining the church, it will develop new, creative ways of thinking and asking questions; questioning things taken for granted or already clarified will open new perspectives so that the church

will get new impulses for its spiritual and organizational life, and its mission as well as a personal renewal will definitely ensure its physical existence in future.

But above all, imagine the impact converted people will have on the church's experience. Every new believer will constitute a new evidence of the changing and redemptive power of the gospel, motivating for the renewal of the personal commitment of the believer to God. And this will definitely affect the church in a very positive way.

The Mission Statement of the Church

Identifying the local church's mission could lead through a purifying process with its outcome condensed into a mission statement. This product will then be discussed again and again, until the church as well as the leading team will internalize it and allow all actions to be taken through the perspective of this mission statement.

The worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church has defined a statement of mission containing three major elements: (1) preaching, (2) growth and (3) healing. The first refers to the message to be shared with others in worship, evangelism and mission. The second refers to education, nurturing, help and development. The third refers to the contribution of the church to ameliorate the suffering in the world by physical, psychical and spiritual help for healing within and outside the church.

For the local church it is desirable to adapt this mission statement to its very special situation. It will be helpful to specifically define how these elements will be accomplished on a local level. But the definition of statement is only the first step. Success depends much on how the local church will succeed to practically implement its vision of mission on the local and global level.

Re-Discovering the Mission of the Church

Especially in the Western world a substantial part of people has lost the desire and the skills for an efficient and continuous mission. Now it becomes necessary to re-discover mission. Some steps could help.

1. Start events with a spiritual emphasis in the local church.
This could be a special week of prayer, special bible study projects, spiritual emphasis worship services once a month, spiritual growth visitation projects, etc. With other words: creative and innovative projects to promote a new spiritual interest and awakening in the local church.
2. Define a mission statement for the local church
After a sensibilization for the spiritual dimension of being a Christian, the way must be opened for action. A mission statement of the local church will be developed together. The more church members are involved, the broader the acceptance and identification will be.

3. Corporately participate in successful outreach projects
The enthusiasm of rediscovered mission needs channels for action. Give church members an opportunity to put their vision and dreams into action. In order to ensure a positive experience right away, try projects that proved successful and do it professionally.
4. Celebrate missionary outreach and encourage people steadily
Organizing a "festival of mission" and rejoicing about people who joined the small groups and the local church will be itself a motivation to continue outreach. Invitations of successful evangelists will also contribute to reinforce this new lifestyle. Keep it burning.

1.2.5 How to implement a mission-oriented church ministry?

Mission is a lifestyle and outreach a life-long process in the life of believers. Resources and time are limited in the church. Therefore it needs to be focused. All activities related to mission will have priority, while all other activities will be labeled helpful, important etc., but secondary. If all activities in the church are used for mission, numerical church growth will happen. Numerical growth as well as the quality of faith will also improve as a natural consequence.

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1.3 Spirituality in Christian Leadership

"Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray,
and continued all night in prayer to God.
And when it was day, He called His disciples to *Himself*,
and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles."
Luke 6:12.13.

His [Jesus'] education was gained from Heaven-appointed sources, from useful work, from the study of the Scriptures, from nature, and from the experiences of life-- God's lesson books, full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart. (CG 50.2)

High class faith and high priority mission need a high quality spiritual fundament. Spirituality develops in a context. This context is theology. For a church leader theology will determine the development of faith in his own life as well as in the life of the church. Before starting the business of leading a church the own theological position has to be defined and evaluated in the light of the Scriptures. Since it is the soil of the life philosophy of the leader and his church, theology is a central concern which results either in enthusiastic growth or in a paralyzing conflict.

1.3.1 Defining Theology

Church theology is not a matter of personal concern and decision. I am glad, that God is still an experienceable entity in our lives, and that fellow believers,

spiritual mentors and the church as an organization are part of this theology defining process.

The outcome of some details may slightly vary, but the center is clear: We are promoting a Christ-centered faith. Christ as the focus of life, belief, and action is the chain linking believers and churches together. Being more than just a lip statement, the life in Christ is an essential, practical, and developmental element of church leadership. If we are to be Christian, Christ needs to be the center of all thinking, activity, decisions, values and norms as well as of evangelism. In other words: Christ-centeredness creates an unmistakable different life-style.

1.3.2 Spiritual responsibility

The Christian leader needs to become aware of his spiritual responsibility in the church. As a believer he will be responsible only to God and himself about what he believes and how he lives as a Christian. As a church member there will be the additional responsibility toward the church he belongs to, because all he does and says will be seen also as a representation of the church he belongs to. As a church leader the responsibility even widens, becoming responsible to the local congregation regarding his presentation of theology, his educational, spiritual and developmental influence as a leader.

In addition to this he needs also to be loyal to the church's organization and administration which he is representing toward the church members. Like a pilot, who cannot just do what he thinks, but has to follow exactly the policy of his company even regarding the greeting of the passengers and information policy, also a church leader is supposed to follow the policy of the local, the regional and the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist church.

A positive, exciting, growing faith is the result of continued spiritual nurturing. A church leader needs to use spiritual sources for the development of his/her own faith. It requires quite a little bit of creativity, to develop a system of personal spiritual nurture, combining different elements and methods to a successful environment of spiritual growth. In the following you will find some suggestions.

1.3.2.1 A thorough prayer activity.

Prayer changes the heart of the believer and opens the doors of heaven. Prayer is an immeasurable gift of heaven to humanity. It is an effective way to get in touch with the divine, to find guidance, to take inside looks into the own heart and to fill up with the water of life.

A praying leader is a precious vessel in the hand of His master, a non-withstanding force in God's team working for the redemption of the lost. In fact, a praying leader has many advantages related to those, who try to do all by

themselves: he gets guidance, so important for decisions; he gets encouragement, so necessary when working with people; he gets a feeling of God's love so helpful for loving others; and above all, he gets in touch with God, experiencing a living relationship with His creator.

1.3.2.2 Deep going Bible study.

The church is not a club. Neither is it a setting only for social events. The church is the place where God meets people in a special way, changing their lives. It is the most appropriate place to communicate the message of life in its full brightness and consistency. A leader intending to nurture his fellow-believers will be very concerned about personally knowing God through His Word as good as possible. If a leader seeks and finds guidance in God's Word, he will be able to share this with his church members and worship service participants.

1.3.2.3 Personal theological training.

Professionals can be of some help to develop a sound instrumentarium for the interpretation of the Bible. But as advocates of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9) every leader and every single church member has to develop a good and sound basic theological understanding of the Bible. Authenticity of faith will be a result of personal discoveries and convictions grown from a continuous personal Biblical and theological study.

1.3.2.4 Frequent theological & spiritual discussions with fellow-believers.

The postmodern society managed to banish religious matters into the area of strict privacy. But this was not the intention of the Christian religion at its very beginning. The experience of Pentecost, Steven's testimony, Paul's preaching in Athenes etc. clearly show that religion is something belonging to the public.

A Christian leader creating a favorable atmosphere for theological and spiritual discussion of his church members will contribute to spiritual encouragement, to Christian education, to a Biblical value genesis in the church and to a more central role of faith in every day's life.

1.3.2.5 Intensive personal relationship with God.

Developing an intensive, personal relationship to our allmighty God and to his redeeming Christ will ensure spiritual development and growth in the church leader's life. A strong and motivating influence on the church's own spiritual development will be the result.

Developing and maintaining a spiritual attitude is not easy. But it is possible. Richard J. Foster in his book: "Celebration of Discipline" (Harper and Row, San

Francisco 1978) gives a list of spiritual disciplines, which can be helpful to the personal and corporate development of spirituality:

1. The inward disciplines
 - C meditation
 - C prayer
 - C fasting
 - C study

2. The outward disciplines
 - C simplicity
 - C solitude
 - C submission
 - C service

3. The corporate disciplines
 - C confession
 - C worship
 - C guidance
 - C celebration

In conclusion is the real substance of the church itself. If a church is to accomplish its task, careful attention will be given by church leaders to a sound but deep development of a spiritual attitude at all levels of church administration with a special emphasis on the local congregation level.

The importance of a spiritual attitude as evangelistic motivator should not be underscored. There are many motivational factors and methods, but the internal motivation is the strongest and the most successful. And only a personal conviction toward a spiritual attitude will efficiently change the believer and the church.

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Unit 2: The Relational Dimension in Christian Leadership

2.1 Vision and Plan: The Vital Importance of Anticipation

“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing,
Unless He reveals His secret to His servants
the prophets.”
Amos 3:7

If men could foresee the result of their course, if they could realize the influence which they exert upon their own families and upon society, they would move with greater caution, and would maintain a firmer reliance upon God. (ST, July 28, 1881 par. 13)

One of the most decisive elements in leadership is the ability of anticipation. It is the leader, who is expected to anticipate developments, leading the group safely to the accomplishment of its task, overcoming obstacles and making use of opened chances on this way.

A successful church leader will anticipate developments of success as well as times of crisis in his church. This will help him to focus on extensive initiative and effective prevention in his work, rather than being stressed with crisis management. A leader that is ahead of developments has a wider range of possibilities for positively shaping his church. For the church anticipation means to have a lasting impact on influencing and changing society.

2.1.1 Understanding the surrounding world

In order to anticipate, a leader has to develop a personal and efficient information management, evaluative skills, as well as the ability of projecting into the future. First of all the leader needs to know the present. A realistic evaluation of the situation of society today and its developments, a sensible knowledge of trends in different areas of public life, are the basis on which anticipation needs to be build. This was the strength of our church’s pioneers. They were very sensitive to things happening around them and always tried to relate them to the church’s life as well as to the church’s theology.

It helps the leader to be aware of the history of his church as well as the one of the community the church is situated in. The leader will be very interested to understand the way of thinking of human beings in general and of his local contemporaries in special, their needs and their desires as well as how to find a way to their heart. Speaking a language they understand (which must not necessarily be their jargon-filled language) is as important as knowing how to further develop first

contacts, how to deepen them and how to bring them to a new quality of existence.

2.1.2 Anticipating Developments, Identifying Trends

Another helpful quality of the leader is anticipation itself. Leaders work in the present and think for the future. Their main activity is preparation through anticipation. To be an effective leader will depend much on the ability to anticipate developments within and outside the church.

The effective Christian leader will also try to grasp the action, rules and motives by which people outside the church are driven and lead. This will help to find the most effective evangelistic approaches. He will understand today's society as a marketplace of competitive projects, philosophies and products. This is important with regard to the leaders vision. "People have to embrace the vision. But this is not easy in a world of a competitive marketplace. Reality shows, that truth not always wins people's heart - and still truth is God's truth." (Barna 1997, 58)

Related to the church this means that the development of theology and the every day religion practice of the believers needs to be anticipated in order to prepare an adequate system of argumentation and a life relevant proclamation of faith and message. Thus it will be possible to impact the believers' and sympathizers' lifestyle, commitment and involvement in the church.

2.1.3 Leading With A Vision

Leaders with a clear vision are respected and accepted. It is through definition that leaders develop a vision and work to implement it. Organizing and keeping the church running is good, but leadership is more. Leadership means developing an all-church-life-integrating vision and to focus all resources toward its implementation.

What is a vision? Barna defines the vision as "a clear mental portrait of a preferable future, communicated by God to His chosen servant-leaders, based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances." (Barna, 1997, 47)

Therefore a vision has to be first of all a gift of God to the leader person. Human vision of the future is limited and fallible, but God overcomes these human limitations. We can anticipate the future, but only God knows it. Therefore a Christian leader will be wise enough not to develop his own, human, selfish and limited vision, but to pray fervently that God may give him, as the Lord's spiritual servant, the needed vision.

Solomon tries to open the reader's eyes for the importance of a God-given vision. "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; But he that keepeth the law, happy is he." (Prov. 29:18 ASV) This kind of vision is more than only a

human invention, it is lastly originated in God. And it is also of vital importance to God's people, because only by transcendent, divine guidance God's people will live life at its best and accomplish its outstanding mission.

"The statement from Proverbs 29:18 is a reminder of the significance of a future orientation of plans, expectations, and hope. A vision gives life. And if there is no vision, the seeds of death are being sown and it is just a matter of time until death will prevail." (Lee 1989, 131)

Reading the Bible from this perspective one is discovering, that God invested much time and effort to prepare people and to plant into their hearts and minds a real, more than human vision. Abraham left his home for an uncertain future (seen from a human perspective!), but his God-given vision was a motivation strong enough to just implement it. With Moses it took 80 years of preparation to be open and receptive to a God-given vision for the Hebrew nation still in captivity. Gideon, Ezechiel, Nehemia - all these leaders have been provided with a clear vision from God and the results were overwhelming.

But the greatest leader of all centuries, Jesus Christ, is the most impressive and yet the closest example of leadership with a vision of divine origin. His healing, His teaching and especially His discipling were motivated by the clear God-given vision of salvation for a lost humanity, because of the problem of sin. Christ himself had a vision clear enough to turn the peoples' mind directing it from nowhere and death toward everlasting life. It was this vision that guided Him through His earthly life and work, as well as to His substitutional death on the cross.

Most people are ready to accept leadership, many of them even want to be led, but they will only give their support to leaders that have a clear, inspiring vision. In order to trust the leaders people need to have the certainty that the leader knows exactly where he is going and that the direction is consistent and predictable.

In conclusion, a leader must be able and willing to live for his vision, if he is to be successful. "You have to know where you're going, to be able to state it clearly and concisely - and you have to care about it passionately. That all adds up to vision, the concise picture of where the company [or church, N.N.] and its people are heading, and why they should be proud of it." (Lee 1989, 133)

2.1.4 Implementing the Vision.

Several steps could possibly help to define and to implement the vision:

2.1.4.1 Identify your vision.

While a statement of mission is describing the reason of your or your's institution's existence, vision is describing the change you are working and looking for; it is focused on the outcome of your efforts. The vision is something the leader develops by himself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Vision is not defined by a two third majority of votes, nor is it a result of the people's input. "A hard pill for some followers to swallow is that God conveys His vision to leaders without asking His followers for their input! As a leader you may wish to ask for people's input; but remember that the ultimate definition of the vision is from God, not your peers." (Barna 1997, 53).

So, while God is the ultimate giver of a vision, we need the advice of our fellows in order to clarify and refine this vision. It is therefore of great importance, whom we consult, when it comes to determine the future of the church. People with a certain neutrality, people with a strongly developed sense of reality, people of deep spirituality and faith, people demonstrating broadness of mind and openness for the new, people being conscious of time-grown traditions, would be good advisors and the optimal sources for an effective Christian leadership.

2.1.4.2 Communicate your vision.

A vision becomes useful at the moment it is communicated. Only shared visions are powerful visions, able to move things. "A shared vision lures people to become more than they already are... Vision inspires people, groups and organizations to learn." (Hawkins 1997, 52) If you want to have action, you need a broadly shared vision: "A clear, widely shared vision energizes church members to learn the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to make their vision happen." (Hawkins 1997, 53).

Even more, a shared vision stimulates cooperation and team work. It encourages individuals, teams and congregations to work together. "It is the vision that will inspire them to sacrifice who they are, and to accomplish something that is not purely selfish." (Barna 1997, 56).

Because vision is so vitally important a leader will communicate his vision using every possible opportunity: in sermons, in committees, in church assemblies, in articles and letters, in the church bulletin, and in discussions with smaller and larger groups of the church the vision will be addressed. It will be spoken of at planning meetings and elections, while preparing projects, and finalizing the budget - in every suitable situation the vision will be communicated with enthusiasm. Related to the church life, and made relevant to it, the vision will be internalized and applied.

Remember: visions are passed on from person to person. And: personal enthusiasm is what makes visions alive. Communicate it with passion, with fervor, with irresistible enthusiasm and you will discover that others will submit to this vision. If people start to embrace the vision and to identify with it, if your vision will become their own vision, leadership will be crowned by success.

2.1.4.3 Put your vision into action.

The vision's task is to change the status quo and to accomplish a better future. This will be the case if the vision becomes a reality. "Implementing the vision calls for several things. You must have a team that is energetically behind the vision. You must amass the resources required for implementation. You need a plan, complete with goals, strategies and tactics, to move forward effectively and efficiently. You need to create processes to introduce the vision into ministry in practical ways. You must have evaluative tools prepared so you can assess how well you are doing along the way, fine-tuning your implementation efforts as you go along." (Barna 1997, 58)

From vision to reality it is a long way: it is the way of action. All we do must be related to the vision, trying to achieve the realization of the vision.

2.1.4.4 Refine and reinforce the vision.

Time, team and situation will change, but generally the vision will outlive the visionary. Church history can provide plenty of examples of outliving visions: e.g. the hope and confidence of our pioneers, thinking big, building big, in spite of a very limited membership at the beginning of the 20th century.

But from time to time it is necessary to adjust the vision. The direction and the core elements do not need to be changed, but the actual relevance. This will renew the commitment of the team, will reinforce the people's decisions to follow their leaders and to accomplish the task of God's church.

But above all it is the spiritual dimension of vision renewal that determines a sound and healthy growth of the church. Praying, reading and studying the Bible together, reflecting on God's Word and fasting together, praising and worshipping God together, encouraging each other and learning together with deep commitment to God will ensure a Bible based desirable future of the church accomplished in full responsibility towards God and His church. In this context, a living, enthusiasm-igniting vision will revive and mobilize the church moving things beyond present imagination.

* * * * *

2.2 Building the Future: Preparing and Implementing Change

“...but, speaking the truth in love,
may grow up in all things
into Him who is the head, Christ.”
Ephesians 4:15

It was by cherishing a humble, teachable spirit that these men [the apostles] gained the experience that enabled them to go out as workers into the harvest field. Their example presents to Christians a lesson of great value. There are many who make but little progress in the divine life because they are too self-sufficient to occupy the position of learners. They are content with a superficial knowledge of God's word. They do not wish to change their faith or practice and hence make no effort to obtain greater light. {AA 283.2}

“The need for innovation is not new, but never before has there been such an urgent demand to continually create new and better solutions... Change is a factor that every organization must accept, so how effectively change is implemented becomes more and more critical to the long-term success of an organization.” (Oakley/Krug 1991, 26)

This is exactly the critical element in church leadership. Without change, sooner or later, an church will die. But change itself is also critical. While certain changes can alterate, apostate and even lead to the dissolution of an institution or organization, other changes will bring development, growth and life. The art of leadership is to find the right content, way, and balance for change.

Principles of Change

Many church members react reluctant to change. This is normal. Especially, when the outcome of change is not visible and clear, fears develop resulting into opposing attitudes. At the same time, a considerable part of the church membership long for change and they will feel their dreams come true, if this occurs. Church members of small churches are dreaming of impressive growth by new baptisms; aged churches lacking a youth group in their church will be dreaming of the renewal of their church by receiving dynamic children and youth.

The difficulties rising with change are mainly because of the concurring tendencies related to change. At the one hand, improvements are wanted - and this certainly implies change -, at the other hand, it is the very fast changing world that creates an accentuated need for stability, facilitating the development of change surviving and resisting practicies. If leaders succeed to implement change taking both elements into consideration, this process will cause less pain and it will be more successful.

Transparency can help a lot to the process of change. If people know exactly, what is the subject of change, and if they certainly know, what is the goal the church is trying to achieve by change, church members will be willing to identify with change rather than to resist it. (The presupposition is only, that the church has already arrived to a basic agreement on local ecclesiology.) But if the areas of change as well as the outcome of change are not at all defined and clear, hostility, fear and resistance will be the well anticipated reactions.

Developing a Sense for Change

Vision implements change and leaders need to be people open to change. It depends much on the leader's personal relationship to change, if leadership in the church will be a successful one, or if it will be merely the management of the status quo. Lee defines the task of leadership as a "change ministry": "Leadership is ministry, when it works for renewal in the church." (Lee 1989,25.)

A successful leader will dream of change, he will anticipate change, he will become a friend with change and he will start himself a process of change. In all his activity he will be aware of the two sides of change: the chance and the risk. The chance is to make things better, to improve meeting the needs of people in and outside the church, and to implement God's exciting plan of proclaiming the Gospel of salvation. The risk is that changes are not entirely predictable and "makeable", that changes may go beyond the anticipated point, also taking into the process and altering some other elements of the church's life.

The divine dimension of change

For a Christian church there is no other way, than admitting change as a part of its existence and mission. Change is a constitutive element of the Gospel itself. Inviting people to the fellowship with God means to change lives, ways of thinking, habits and actions. "And let not your behaviour be like that of this world, but be changed and made new in mind..." (Romans 12:2 BBE) God's redemptive message is a message of change. And His church, which proclaims this message, needs to be subject to change as well.

Understanding the complexity of change in the church

In order to understand the qualitative difference between running a church and leading a church, it is necessary to understand the church as a very complex system. The systemic approach will help to deal with change in the church in a complex, competent and successful manner.

In a systemic approach change is related not only to isolated elements, but always seen as related to all other areas of church life and existence. It takes into consideration immediate and long term influence of developments as well as side

and cross connections related to the area to be changed. With other words, a wholistic view in the entire process of change will take the “system called church” into proper consideration.

Even simple changes will affect a plenitude of other aspects in the church’s life, because in an organism every organ is vitally connected to all other organs, an interdependent influence is implicated. Even so called minor changes have so many ramifications and implications on related and further areas, that, in fact, they involve a systemic change.

Some steps could help the leader going successful through the process of preparing and implementing change in the church.

1. Make a thorough and honest analysis of the past 20 years of the church.
2. Define the areas of success, growth and satisfaction.
3. Try honestly to find out the problem areas of the church’s life.
4. Use the best opportunities for balanced consultation.
5. Develop a vision for change.
6. Communicate and refine this vision.
7. Win people for change.
8. Implement change.
9. Evaluate change.
10. Enjoy successful change and think on the next step.

Change is life. Sometimes it can be challenging to implement changes, but right changes will prove as new impulses for the revitalization of the church.

* * * * *

2.3 Shared Leadership - Team-Work in Christian Leadership

“Though one may be overpowered by another,
two can withstand him.
And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”
Ecclesiastes 4:12

God would have you united in pleasant cords of companionship. As the Lord's workmen, you are to open your plans one to another. These plans must be carefully and prayerfully considered; for the Lord will leave those who do not do this to stumble in their own supposed wisdom and superior greatness. . . .--Letter 49, 1897 (Sept. 1897, To Brn. Daniells, Colcord, Faulkhead, Palmer, Salisbury). (ChL 39.4)

2.3.1 Why Team Leadership?

During the last one hundred years the concept of leadership changed from authoritarian, through some other stages, to the cooperative team leadership we experience today in different forms. But why practice team leadership in the church? There are some strong arguments in favor of team leadership.

First of all, a group of people will be more successful in ministry than one single person. Doing all things by himself, a leader would face very soon the symptoms of personal limitation and burnout. A team gives the opportunity to complementary use of talents, competences and energies. And this is an imperative in a church with a wide range of needs and actions.

Second, society has changed. Authorities are no longer voluntarily accepted. Since the role of the individual got some sort of priority, only a personal identification with an institution, and especially with its leader, will be able to assure a strong support and cooperation. Therefore in a postmodern society with the changed life context of our churches and their members, there is no alternative to team leadership.

Third, effectiveness of work is growing with a well functioning team. “Most of the leadership that can be called effective involves a number of individuals acting in a team relationship... In the church, too, we are learning about the value of team leadership. We speak of collegiality, of mutual ministry, of shared responsibility.” (Lee 1989, 116)

Fourth, there are convincing ecclesiological and theological arguments for team leadership. Paul’s description of the church is illustrated by the symbol of a body with many members corelated in their function, summing up an effective entity:

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." (1Cor.12: 4-12)

The Scriptures do not argue much about team ministry. In the Word of God team ministry is involved, simply included. We read about Moses, who shared his responsibilities (Exodus 18:13-26), about Jesus, who started the tremendous work with a team of only 12 disciples and about the early church, who were well aware of the necessity of small and larger teams for the success of their mission (Acts 6:1-7; 13:2) So the Bible suggests, that every member has a specific role similar to the members of a body with their specific role for the wellness of the body.

But there is still one argument left. This is the truth about Trinity. In spite of the fact, that it goes beyond human comprehension, we discover, that the Godhead, as our primary model, gives us an example of team leadership. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work together in their leadership tasks for the Universe as well as for the salvation of the human race. The perfect Universe leadership encourages us to team leadership in the church.

2.3.2 Qualities of Team-Leader

Loving people. If a leader is caring for people, an atmosphere of love, appreciation and care among church members will be established. A spiritual Christian leader will show real interest and appreciation for people. Birthdays, baptismal anniversaries, and other personal events will attract his attention and people will feel, that he is not primarily concerned about his position, but that he has real interest for the people he is leading.

Openness for critique. A positive culture of critique needs also to be established and developed. Critique is necessary, as a system ensuring feed-back. In order to function, it has to be constructive critique. If there is an atmosphere of trust and friendship, critique will be possible and effective. This will help to develop an attitude of focusing on things needed for growth. Minor things and words detrimental to the appreciation and respect toward a person will be left non-spoken.

Consulting advisors. A Christian team-leader will also know, how to enlarge his competency. Consultation with others will help him to keep the balance and to develop balanced decisions. If the leaders in ancient Bible times, as well as today's

politicians, and economical leaders, needed to have advisors, a Christian leader needs them even more. It is true, God is the best advisor, but we need also people to consult. We have church fellows, whom God can use as advisors for us. This will remind us, that we are neither independent, nor isolated rulers, but we are co-workers with God and our fellow-believers.

2.3.3 Building Up a Team

Before choosing the twelve, Jesus spent the night in prayer. "Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles." (Lk. 6:12.13)

This Bible passage makes clear, how important it is to choose the right persons as part of the church's leading team. Due to Paul's description of a profile of church leaders, it is the spiritual attitude as well as the practical Christian life that is decisive for choosing a team member. Skills, today often overemphasized, are only of secondary importance. (1 Tim. 1:1-10)

Successful leadership depends on the leader's capacity to build team spirit among the team members and to develop active and positive relationships among them. It is a mistake just to ask who wants to do what in the church. This has to be a well thought through mutual process under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

There are some basic elements to be taken into consideration for the selection of team members:

2.3.3.1 Spirituality

On the top of the list of qualities there has to be the spiritual element. Rather than selling cars or food or whatever business it might be, we exist for the spiritual nurture of people inside and outside the church. Only a spiritual person will be able to positively influence and promote a spiritual attitude in the church. This is why the spiritual aptitude needs to be taken into consideration first.

2.3.3.2 Competence

To be part of the team a person has to show competency for the work he is expected to do. It is the ability to know the job, to be prepared to do the job and that it can be expected that the job will be done well. Although there needs to be a starting competency, through experience and continuing education a person can grow in its competency.

2.3.3.3 Representative diversity

It is often suggested that homogeneity is essential for an effective team work (Lee 1989, 121.122), thus avoiding contradictions and time consuming arguing discussions. And indeed, it makes it more easy to the leader to arrive to desired decisions, if the team members agree with his view and position. But practice shows, that it is a leader's trap to share around him only people that please his views and plans.

A broad consensus achieved by gathering the "same direction thinking persons" into the leading team is in danger not to represent the reality of the church with its diversity of attitudes. In the long term it might lead to the loss of a broad support among church members themselves, to one-sidedness, to polarization and even manipulation.

It is easy to take decisions if there is almost no opposition, no critique, no concurring alternatives and always a group to support the leader's ideas. But if independent or even opposing groups shoot up, the leader knows, that something went wrong, that needs and people have been overlooked and overheard, so that they developed an inner distance expressing by words and actions: "It is not my church any more."

Therefore building up a team a successful leader will strive for the realization of representative diversity. If there are progressive and innovative people in the team, their input will enrich the work with new, progressive, innovative projects. At the same time, the traditional oriented team member will function as an element of continuity, balance and, if needed, even correction. Of great complementary worth is also the combination of strongly mission oriented persons with relationship oriented and also with organizational/consolidational people within the team.

Representative diversity is an element enriching the church work and promoting high quality performance, provided the team members meet two important characteristics: a strong commitment to cooperation and a mediatory and conciliant attitude.

2.3.3.4 Commitment to the Team and Its Task

For the work in a team commitment to the team itself and commitment to the task of the leadership team in the local church might be one of the key issues of success. Differences can only focus on a common direction, if team-spirit is shared by every single member of the team. It is the open and honest commitment to the mission of the church that creates a common basis bridging differences and making cooperation possible. Identity with the church and loyalty toward the church are both indispensable.

2.3.4 Principles of Work in a Team

2.3.4.1 Consensus

For a team to function it needs to find a consensus regarding the goals towards which the team will be working. "The first essential of good staff relations is not a proper set of job descriptions or a definitive assignment of duties, but is acceptance and understanding among the persons involved, and steadfast allegiance to a common overall purpose." (Lee 1989, 117)

While diversity is a blessing in the constitution of a team, the team members must come together to discuss in depth the common goal they will work for and finally to agree about the direction they will go together. Sometimes it might be difficult to come together with so different positions, but if the leading team does not succeed in doing so, how should the whole congregation arrive to unity?

To exclude persons with different views from the leading team of a church is no solution, because leading a church means to be the leader of ALL church members. And this must become evident also in the leading team. If necessary the local pastor or, in some cases even the conference, will be invited to mediate between the different groups in the church and to lead the representative leadership team to a consensus the team can work with. "Members of a well-functioning staff are encouraged to share their expectations and concerns about the purpose and functions fo the staff, developing a common goal for all to affirm." (Lee 1989, 117)

The concern for finding a consensus must go even deeper. Not only the general pupose and direction of the team must be defined by a consensus, but also the actions of the team. Decisions should be taken, whenever possible, not by majority votes, but by consensus, no matter if it is the church board, the church at large in its assembly or a work commission, that has to take decisions.

Consensus determines the highest percentage of personal identification, commitment and responsibility. Therefore, a Christian leader will strive in every situation possible for a consensus, thus accomplishing more goals than any other procedure: identification with the decision, commitment to it, unity of the church, collegial atmosphere, etc.

2.3.4.2 Open, Effective Communication

Communications is always a two-way process. Team members must have an ability to responsibly and openly communicate their points of view. But at the same time they need to be able to carefully listen to the concerns of their team colleagues. "Through communication team members make known their thoughts, desires, questions, knowledge, and plans. Through communication team members inform, persuade, consult, recognize, appreciate, and participate." (Lee 1989, 120)

Good communication is not a result of chance, but of good leadership. The team leader will therefore allot certain time sequences to facilitate open communication within the leading team. This would be a very well invested time, since through good communication misunderstandings and incomplete information can be corrected, thus avoiding unnecessary conflicts and the deterioration of the working atmosphere. And, as a further aspect, exchanging information about the own area of activity will promote common, cross-departmental projects in the church.

(For the approfondation of communication knowledge and skills consult the bibliography.)

2.3.4.3 Clear Role Expectations

A team will function with excellence, if its members know clearly their role expectations. It is necessary to clarify the role of each team member. This can be done in different ways. The less helpful way will be to give the person a paper with the job description and tell him/her: "Just read, and you will know, what is expected of you." A team is not a machine. And this is good so. A team lives by interaction. There are teams with clean formulated role descriptions but poorly functioning, because of advanced individualization of the team members.

It might be better to have some meetings of the team, in which the roles are negotiated between the team-members. This will result into a better commitment to the own responsibilities, as well as a more cooperative attitude towards the responsibility of the other members of the team. With other words: it could create a sort of corporate responsibility. The outcome of the negotiation can be written down for later reference.

Compensation of responsibilities. Having one's own responsibility does not mean, that the work area of other team members is of no interest to me. At the clarifying sessions of the team there need to be found ways of compensation of responsibility. This means, that some principles have to be worked out, which allow and also ensure, that in certain situations, a team members has the right and the responsibility to act within another area of responsibility, especially when spontaneous help is needed, similar to well functioning families. Otherwise there will be lacks of definitions, with no links between the different departments and a poor service to the church.

2.3.4.4 Adequate Decision-Making Procedures

A well functioning team will develop a transparent and effective procedure of taking decisions. Thus the team must develop a set of instruments and methods to get reality reflecting informations and to use them properly in the process of analysis, thus ensuring the best presuppositions for taking good decisions.

Good and complete information is as important, as team communication and the search for a consensus. Considering the different alternatives and reflecting on the best arguments for each alternative will help to take sound, balanced and commonly supported decisions. In difficult cases, it will be even wise to seek the advise of experienced, competent, spritual persons.

Another element in the decision making procedure is the question of competency. Which decisions are within the responsibility of the church board? Which need to be addressed by the church assembly? Which to the local conference? etc. Respecting competencies will result into reduced conflict situations.

2.3.4.5 Trust as a Basis for Cooperation in the Team

Trust is maybe one of the most sensitive, but also most important ingredients for a good team to work successfully. "Trust means that we are honest in 'owning' our feelings and ideas, open in sharing those feelings and ideas, and dependable in keeping our word and behaving consistently with our values and principles. We build trust in others by behaving trustworthily ourselves and by trusting them." (Follett, 50)

Trust cannot be ordered. It is something that needs time to grow as a common development of a team's life. Without trust and confidence it is impossible to work in a team. A leading team lacking trust will end up in continuous conflict. And conflict is a sure way to avoid success. But being honest, keeping word and behaving consistently will motivate people to accord trust in advance. Each time we act trustworthy we will strengthen the basis of trust within the team.

People react very sensitive to the violation of feelings, to breaking of promises, to confidential matters made public, to dishonest and unfair behavior. It will undermine the the trust people toward their leaders. Sometimes, trust can be recovered, but it is very, very difficult after a situation of disappointment and misuse.

Investing trust is the best way to produce trust, rather than demanding it. Trying to see the good things in people, to expect the best of them, and to openly communicate this, will positively influence all team members. Trusting does not mean to close eyes and blindly go through. It means to accept the risk of eventual failure and to help people to develop a mutual atmosphere of confidence and honesty.

2.3.4.6 Good and Positive Team-Relationships

A team is more than just a group of people working by chance on the same project. In church leadership team members identify with the group and its ideas, and they stay loyal to the group in spite of individual interests. In order to form a

team, the members of a group have to develop positive relationships among them.

“In a team, people must value cooperation more than competition or pure individualism. They must believe that the synergy of the group is more productive and satisfying than for each person to work alone.” (Follett, 51)

Good relationships need to be built up and nourished. Team members need to spend time together in order to know each other. They need to have an opportunity to openly communicate their thoughts, to experience acceptance, and a positive emotional atmosphere within the group. Feeling that the other team members are concerned about the personal joys and needs, about the family members and special situations in life, will promote the development of better relationships.

Team members have to learn how to deal with interpersonal conflicts and how to solve them in a constructive way. Taking appointments seriously and completing assignments promptly also motivates the development of a positive, cooperative atmosphere. Applied “group norms will create a strong team identity and encourage quality work, personal respect, and caring relationships.” (Follett, 51)

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Unit 3: The Professional Dimension in Christian Leadership

3.1. Quality and Development in Christian Leadership

From everything given to you,
let the best of it, the holy part of it,
be offered as a lifted offering to the Lord.
Numeri 18:29 BBE

Let each give love rather than exact it. Cultivate that which is noblest in yourselves, and be quick to recognize the good qualities in each other. The consciousness of being appreciated is a wonderful stimulus and satisfaction. Sympathy and respect encourage the striving after excellence, and love itself increases as it stimulates to nobler aims. (AH 107.3)

Quality as a divine factor. The gospel and its proclamation is a matter of quality. At the very beginning of the Bible, the Earth's creation, quality is a significant component: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Gen. 1:31.) Throughout salvation history it soon becomes clear, that only the best is good enough: the best animals had to be sacrificed, the best from the crop had to be given as tithe, the best service had to be done at the tabernacle, the highest personality of the Universe, the Son of God, had to die for the humans salvation from sin. Jesus Christ Himself brought "life at its best".

The outstanding quality of the gospel sets also standards for church work. For God's precious creations, for the human beings Jesus so highly respected while on earth, only the best service is good enough. Christian leadership means therefore acting with excellence. Offering less than the best for people lost in their sin, comes into conflict with the nature and content of the gospel.

Quality as a requirement of postmodern reality. Facing the fact, that our age is presenting ultra-perfect products to their customers (from cars, computers and CD's to perfectly sized cucumbers, tomatoes and pears), people are used to receive quality products. Less than a high quality of worship services, evangelistic events, education and care will lower the interest by leaving the impression of lacking professionalism.

3.1.1 High Quality Theology

Dealing with God's Word, reading, proclaiming and explaining it is a very responsible task in Christian leadership. Theology determines the content of beliefs of the church members, which represents a process of development of deep personal religious convictions. A sound theology will be characterized by Christ-centeredness, surrender to God's explicit revelation and obedience.

The Apostle Paul defines very specifically such a sound theology: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind... For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." (1 Timothy 1:7.12-14)

In the Bible God expects us to be responsible dealing with the message we have to proclaim: there is nothing to be added, and nothing to be left out (Deutonomy 4:2; Matthew 5:17-19; Revelation 22:18.19), that means to honestly study and proclaim the truths God reveals to us. High quality theology demands to withstand the temptation of just adopting what other, favorite or generally respected theologians said, but to dig and deeply go to the roots, trying to critically follow a given argumentation developing a theology with the above mentioned characteristics.

3.1.2 High Quality Mission.

The loving responsibility for people and the limited opportunities for mission request a high quality of mission. It is true, that the product is the most important - and the gospel is the best quality one can offer people for their life. But today we are all educated to look also to the package. Sometimes more is invested to make products attractive, than for the production of the product itself. This means, that the best product, the gospel, should be presented to people also in the most attractive way, to open their eyes and hearts, and to make redemption desirable to them.

All activities connected to mission need therefore to be of the highest quality possible: planning, organization, presentation, the follow-up work, etc. should meet high standards. Often people give us one or two opportunities to appeal to them and eventually win them for a life with Christ. Good preparation will facilitate the work to win the people's interest, and excellence in contact care will create a favorable environment for positive decisions for Christ and His church.

3.1.3 High Quality Ministry

3.1.3.1 Worship and Quality

Related to the worship services in the church it means, that offering the best is an expression of being true to the gospel we preach. All elements of worship need to be very thoughtful prepared in order to form an organic unity and to meet the various needs of the attendants. Welcoming, singing, praying, preaching, anything happening in the worship needs to be of the highest quality possible in means of content, presentation and education. It simply needs to be the best we can

offer.

3.1.3.2 Ministry and Quality

Organization, visitation, maintenance, etc. all areas of activity in the church should be marked by quality. Maybe sometimes people would argue, that we cannot overtax people and it cannot always be the best. And it is true, that nobody wishes the burnout of co-workers. But remember, that the best companies are those known for their continuous high quality. And since the church is much more than a company, who will really want to give people they really love less than the best possible?

3.1.3.3 Leadership and Quality

The board and the assembly meetings should also be of the highest quality. People are members of our churches because they freely decided to do so. The only things, that can tie them to the church are a high quality of love becoming visible in interpersonal relationships combined with high quality service and theology. Therefore it is a wise decision to offer the best to all participants. Meetings should be thoughtful prepared, discussions need to be led to the point, presentations made interesting and the positive desired outcome to become visible. Nothing less will attract a volunteer audience to attend the meetings.

3.1.4 High Quality Service

Creativity, Innovation and Quality. Maintaining high quality in church work includes also creativity and innovation. I really like to visit archaeological sites. It is always impressive to stay there between century and millenary old stones and to imagine, that diligent people have been designing and building these impressive buildings. But then another question comes up to me: why did this flourishing settlement become a ruin? It is the lack of living, creative and innovative people, that turned these masterpieces of architecture into ruins.

The same is true for the church. Some churches spread a vivid, warm, creative atmosphere making you feel home at once, while others give you the impression that time stopped to move long ago: the same grey walls, the same decoration for decades, the same program for years and years. A living, growing church will give evidence of creativity.

From time to time it is necessary to introduce some new elements in the life of the church. Nothing works better, than including some (positively) surprising elements in worship. People need to have the feeling to miss something, if they do not attend church. They should be excited about the next Sabbath, they should look forward with pleasure. Creativity is a characteristic of the gospel and our mission. I always enjoy reading the passage in the gospel of John, where Jesus meets the

Samaritan women at James' Well (John 4). What a creative way to win this women for eternal life!

Another element of quality in church work is innovation. Some people would be very, very cautious at this point - and this is normal and necessary. But in spite of the fact, that the church has to proclaim an everlasting gospel of a God that stands for continuity and reliability, proclaiming the gospel and caring for the church needs continuous innovation of methods and approaches, if it is to stay relevant to the believers.

Quality-Development and Quality-Growth. Church history demonstrates this in a very impressive way. The Reformation, Pietism, Methodism, Adventism, etc. all these movements contributed to a deeper understanding of God's Word and to a closer relationship between the believer and his redeeming God. Theologically, 1888 was decisive to discover and understand the centrality of the *righteousness by faith* in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The second half of the 20th century lead the Seventh-day Adventist Church to a deeper understanding of prophecy, the sanctuary and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Development and growth never happened as a result of just repeating what always has been said, but by innovative thinking sometimes challenging the church. Based on God's Word, lead by a deeply spiritual attitude, and striving for a consensus it was possible to grow and to develop toward a broader understanding of the theology, the mission and the existence of the church, building a solid, historically grown fundament of beliefs.

Leaders are the persons in charge to discover and chanalize the creativity of the church. They themselves need to be "machines of creative and innovative ideas" and they also need to facilitate the activity of creative and innovative people in the church.

The best we can offer to a loving God, to the church we appreciate, to lost people, and to the society we care for is just good enough, if it is outstanding: quality management in planning, excellence in performance, honest evaluation of activities, such as sermons, theology, old and new styles of worship, etc. ending up in effective changes. And all this driven by the desire to better serve the Lord and humanity.

* * * * *

3.2 A Total Mission Oriented Management

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant,
 whom his master made ruler over his household,
 to give them food in due season?
 Blessed is that servant
 whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing."
 Matthew 24:45.46

The work of God calls for men of high moral powers to engage in its promulgation. Men are wanted whose hearts are nerved with holy fervor, men of strong purpose who are not easily moved, who can lay down every selfish interest and give all for the cross and the crown... God calls for men of heart, men of mind, men of moral integrity, whom He can make the depositories of His truth, and who will correctly represent its sacred principles in their daily life.--Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 23. (ChL 17.1)

Remember the definition of leadership: Management is only one of the elements constituting leadership, and it is a secondary one. In fact management is the organizational and administrative part of keeping a church and its visionary programs running. Nevertheless, the professionalism of management in church leadership will strongly determine success.

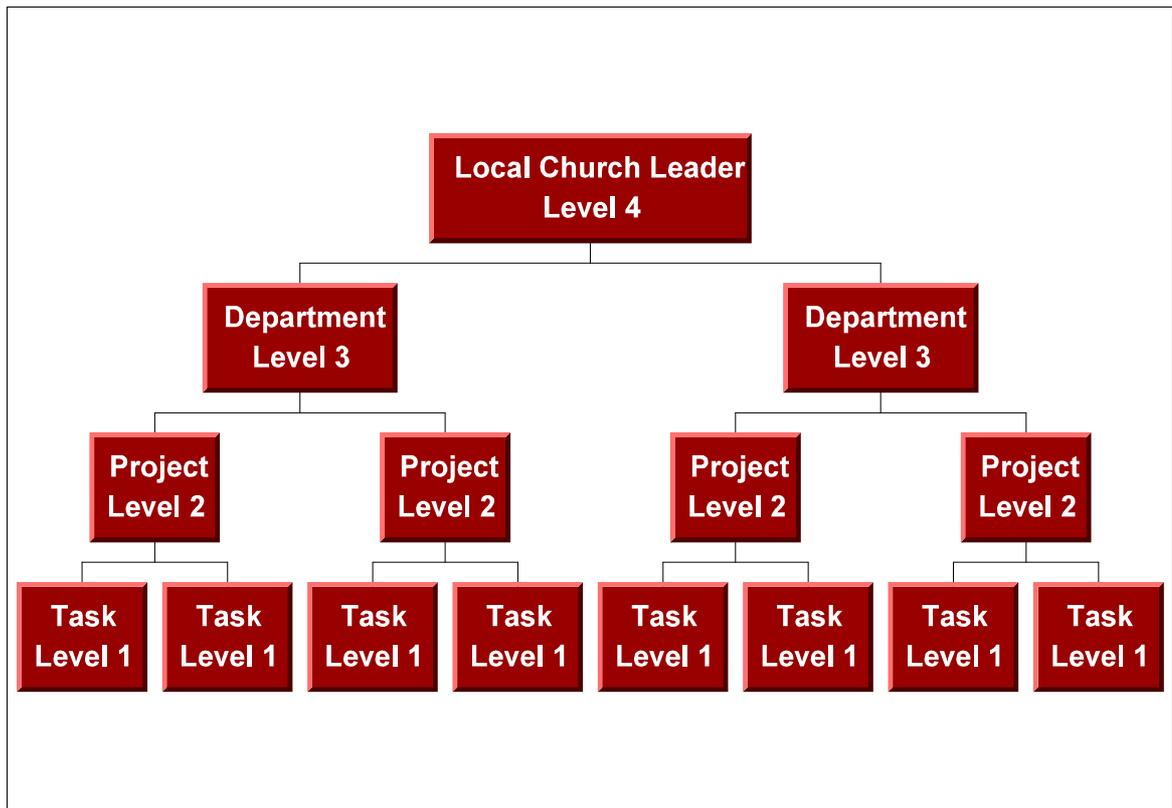
3.2.1 Responsibility Management

The nature of Christian leadership is characterized by its focus on responsibility: Responsibility toward God, responsibility toward the local church and its members, responsibility toward the worldwide church, responsibility toward the local pastor and the leadership team.

Successful leadership will be measured on how the Christian leader succeeds to take into account the different areas of responsibility in his work and on his ability to thoughtfully differentiate between personally kept responsibilities and delegated responsibilities.

A frequent mistake in leadership is to delegate with the work also the ultimate responsibility, which often results into failure or at its best in uncoordinated parallel double work. To avoid this, a Christian leader will be aware of different levels of responsibility and will respectively deal with it. The higher the level, the more inclusive responsibility will be, with the most inclusive responsibility of the local church leader.

Four different level of responsibility proved helpful in the local church practice: level 1: task responsibility, level 2: project responsibility, level 3: area responsibility (department), and level 4: congregational responsibility (local church leadership).



Inclusiveness of Responsibility in the Local Church

3.2.2 Human Resource Management

A very sensitive and at the same time decisive area of management is the human resource management. Whether it deals with keeping church members happy and active in the church, developing and maintaining a dynamic and content leadership team or winning the interested people for a lasting relationship that leads them into the church - human resource management represents a crucial element of church ministry, because without people there will be no leadership and certainly no church.

A great number of companies discovered, that caring for the physical and mental health of their employees will ensure a more effective use of the human resources. Now, I don't want to suggest to establish fitness centers in every church's basement, but a successful Christian leader will accept responsibility for the very immanent, physical and health-related needs of his co-workers.

Even Jesus includes this issue in his last speeches on earth: "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing." (Mt. 24:45.46.) And, in another situation Jesus says to his disciples: "Come aside... and rest a while." (Mk. 6:31.)

Every wise leader will use very carefully his human resources in the church. This means, that he will also care for times of rest and renewal of his team-members and every active member in the church. Sometimes the church leader needs to avoid overtax of active church members knowing, that in the long range, this will make them more efficient.

(For more details on this topic see chapter 4.1)

3.2.3 Knowledge and Information Management

In Christian Leadership knowledge and information management is even more important than in all other secular business. It is God's truth of salvation that motivates for service and it is His message of call to redemption that needs to be communicated. This sets the highest standards ever with regard to the honesty, wholeness and truth in communication.

The art of passing on information. It is an illusion to believe, that the best information politics is to pass on ALL information to the church members and to let them decide. This is not possible and it will not be effective. Information overload, lack of background information and lack of specific training makes it often impossible to properly handle the knowledge. Information needs to be (a) comprehensive, (b) transparent, (c) representative and (d) honest.

Information sources. Christian leaders need to develop a sound policy of gathering representative information and to properly pass it on to the community of faith. This does not mean that access to information should be denied - this would mean manipulation. But the task of a skilled Christian leader would be to inform church members of what is going on in the regional as well as in the worldwide church, and to teach them where, when and how to get the best information. It is a matter of education, to motivate church members through example to prefer high quality Christian sources instead of secularized ones, serious and reliable sources rather than primitive newspapers and TV programs.

Information that promotes good relationships to the organization. A church has the right to be informed about the newest developments in the local as well as in the worldwide church's life, whether it is a development of theological, evangelistic, organizational or life practice information. To be informed, to pray for others and to help with different projects will strengthen the feeling of being a family-church. Special care should be given by the local church leader to denominational information given by and through the local conference.

Continuously enriching the church's knowledge horizon. Having the opportunity to cross the own limited horizon, church members often experience something like a revelation of a new world. Visiting another church, visiting historical places of Biblical and church history, or participating in a continental or

even worldwide conference could open new horizons to the church members. The interesting thing is, that suddenly church members start to develop a new, fresh understanding and approach to very basic elements of church life.

3.2.4 Time Management

An Adventist philosophy of time. The Sabbath gives Seventh-day Adventists a very special view of time, different from the other views in the surrounding world. While businessmen believe that "time is money", and reincarnational religions give the impression of "the meaninglessness of the present life time", Christianity in general and Adventism in special developed a new quality of the notion of time. For an Adventist Christian time is a high quality life element, it is unique, very valuable, and it is a divine gift.

Speaking about the immanent aspect of God's Kingdom, Jesus Christ specifies, that even in this life it is His intention, that His followers will live a better life. "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly." (John 10:10) "There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters... who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time... and in the age to come, eternal life." (Mark 10:29.30)

Connected to this life, there is also another dimension of time - the eternal one. In fact, for an Adventist Christian time is endless, because after the limited time of this life there will be an unlimited time to be shared in eternity. The eternal dimension helps to responsibly use the immanent dimension of time and to deeply appreciate each hour and day we live as God's special and personal gift.

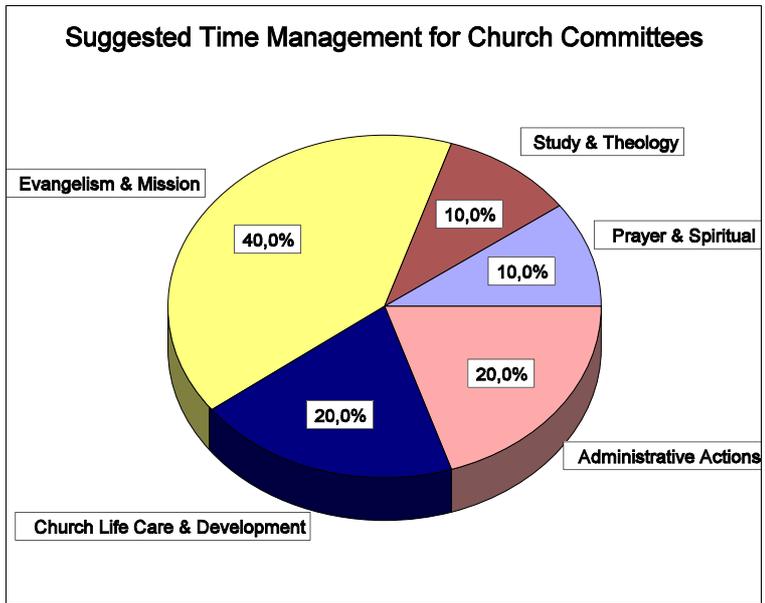
Professional time stewardship. Management of time requires a high standard from the Christian leader. All of us have 24 hours a day time to live. Part of this time we invest into Church activities. A leader will strive to use this time most effective possible.

A church leader is responsible for the time of his congregation. When it comes to church activities, some questions could help to determine the use of time and suggest the needed adjustment:

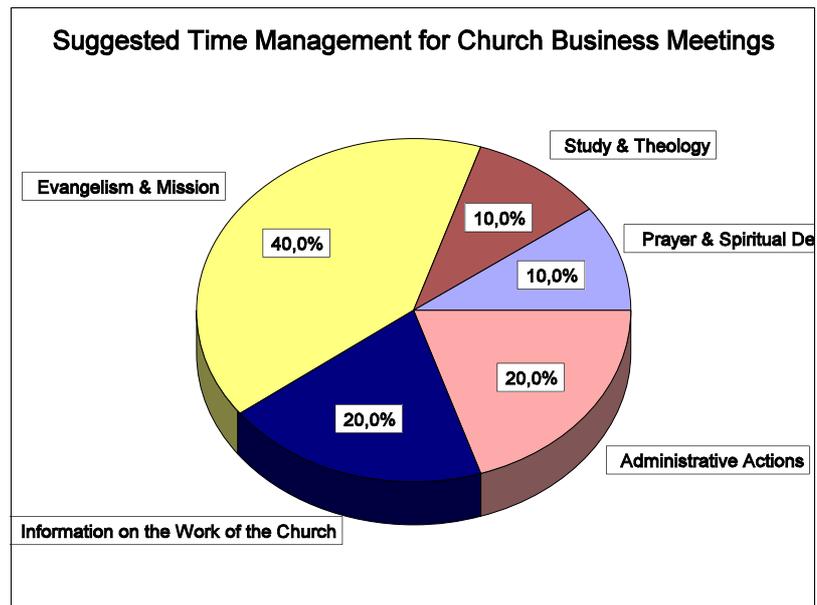
- How much time does the church use for maintenance and care?
- How much time is used to solve problems?
- How much time is invested in creative, evangelistic ministry?
- How much time is allotted for the church members and sympathisants to grow spiritually as well as theologically?

Time plays also a very important role in dealing with interested people. There are times of openness to the Gospel and times, when it is hard to come closer to certain persons. A successful leader will develop a very sensitive approach to time in

the context of relationships and will help the church members to effectively use times of openness in evangelism.



Often church members and leaders complain of loss of time. This is a suggestion for time use in board and church meetings seen from an evangelistic approach to ecclesiology.



For more information see: Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, Ed. 2000, p.81.

(For more about time management see bibliography)

3.2.5 Activity Management

Closely related to the understanding of time is the management of church activities. From the wide range of helpful, interesting and demanded church activities it is necessary from time to time to make an assessment of efficiency and re-focus the activities into a common direction.

It makes no sense to have one hundred different activities in competition with

each other trying to mobilize people in the church. Re-thinking and bringing into a new relationship the visionary plans with the available resources of time, people and finances will give the church a new impact that could produce miracles.

3.2.6 Decision Making Management

Leading a church demands taking many decisions. Some need to be taken by the leader himself, most of them by the church board and the church at large. Finally, evangelism and mission is closely tied to the process of decision taking of the interested people.

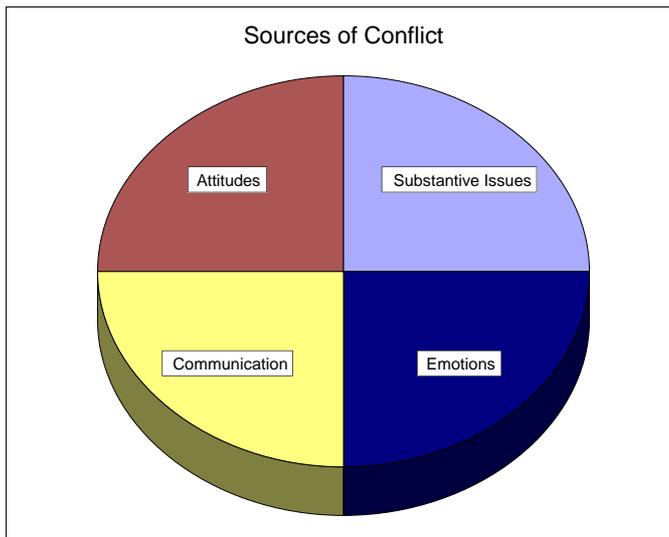
Especially in team-ministry decision making is a sensible process and the leader must know, that the more people he succeeds to involve in the decision taking process, the larger his support will be in the church. Informing people about plans, asking for suggestions and critique will strengthen the support.

3.2.7 Conflict Management

Dealing with conflict. God's commandment of unity has a very practical goal. At the creation God intended relationships to exist in harmony. But sin changed the face of created relationships radically. It changed Adam's and Eve's relationship to God and it changed Cain's relationship to Abel ending up in murder. Conflict is therefore a sad reality of the world's life. What a wonderful gift Jesus made to His followers, pointing out that faith that changes demands demands an attitude favorable to solving conflicts, thus making unity possible. In fact, the divine message is a message of reconciliation between people and God as well as among people in conflict.

Again and again the Bible tells that peace is desirable and even necessary for the life of the believer: "The counselors of peace have joy", (Prov. 12:20) and "God has called us to peace." (1 Cor. 7:15) Redemption means in fact the solving of the conflict with God, thus bringing the relationship to the source of life into harmony. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1)

What are the sources of conflict in the church? McSwain and Treadwell suggest that there are four major sources of conflict in the church. There are: 1. attitudinal conflicts, 2. substantive conflicts, 3. emotional conflicts, and 4. communicational conflicts. (McSwain & Treadwell 1997, 17) In spite of the fact, that these elements are closely related to each other, it is helpful to determine the main source of a conflict in order to find a good way for solution.



Three quarters of the conflicts result from minor and solvable differences. However, a substantial part of the conflicts occur as a result of perturbed communication. Knowing this a great amount of conflicts become avoidable. This shows how important it is, to successfully communicate with each other, to develop an atmosphere of open, honest, congruent communication in the church. Good communication

can prevent fears and reluctant reactions and it will build up confidence and trust.

Attitudes and Emotions, another source of conflicts, are difficult to deal with, because they are not always visible and sometimes people are not even aware of them. But there is no need for resignation. Both these sources are subject to positive influence and change.

Finally, the substantive issues as a source of conflict, are the most sensitive ones, because they are on matters of deep convictions, which are not so easy to change or to agree for a compromise, like theology, personal life philosophy, etc. As far as content is concerned, they are divisive and may create deep trenches between people. The strong point is that they are able to be rationalized, and maybe this could open a way out of the conflict.

What can a Christian leader do, to solve conflicts? Or at least how to find a way of mutual and active coexistence in the church? Here are some steps, that may help in similar situation:

1. Anticipate and try to avoid conflicts

Being sensitive to conditions foreshadowing the appearance of conflicts could help to do preventive work. It is better to prevent conflicts, than to work on solving them.

2. Create awareness of the problem

Before starting tratatives for conflict solving, it is necessary to create an awareness of the problem with the parties involved. If they discover the wide-spread effect of the conflict within the "system called church" it is much easier to look together for solutions.

3. Start “round-table-discussions” with the persons involved

If the persons involved can expect fairness, equality and integrity from the leader, they are likely to agree to get involved in tratatives toward a solution of the conflict. And if the discussion is focused on the common goal of finding a solution, avoiding to get stuck in past and present problems, the situation has a real chance for success.

4. Find common projects to enforce the positive outcome

After finding a common solution for conflict it is necessary to continue this development of rapprochement by working together and practice positive interaction. An attractive project will help to tie people together by work. The follow-up work will include active care for growing relationships in order to develop a lasting atmosphere of mutual understanding in the church.

5. Never give up.

The unity of the church is a continual concern for every successful Christian leader. Even if temporary limited solutions will suggest a different approach and maybe separation for different projects may be advisable, but the ultimate goal must be the unity and a harmonious co-habitation of different personalities in the church.

Mediators needed. Today the church needs more than ever before mediators to bring people together. Increasing self-confidence, growing individualism, and unavoidable stress, as faced in the postmodern society, represent a fertile ground for conflicts. Working whole-heartedly for the unity in the church will represent an attractive counterpart to the situation in our society, thus having also a strong missionary impact. Dynamic Christian leaders will recognize the importance of the issue, and they will develop a positive tradition of unity in their local congregations by appointing and supporting persons with mediatory abilities. (In the secular world mediation also became a very appreciated approach to solve conflicts between people at the working place, in the context of divorce, etc.)

3.2.8 Financial Management

In visionary Christian leadership finances always need to be secondary. It is true, that our world developed so much toward the centrality of money, that the church hardly can refrain from dealing with it. Building churches costs money, maintenance, electricity, evangelism etc. also needs money. But a wise leader will never allow finances to get supremacy over the vision and the mission of the church.

The impressive success of our pioneers - and the same happens in fast growing regions of today's Seventh- day Adventist world - was determined among other elements also by the fact, that they put vision first and money behind. If a leading team asks the question: "What do we want/need/have to accomplish?", they will certainly find ways to finance the envisioned project. But if the first question is: "Do we have the money for this project?" the project already died before starting it.

Now, I don't want to suggest, that finances are of no importance. The opposite is the case. In the Bible God has made given us an excellent system of financing church work through tithe and offerings. Promoting a faithful and active financial involvement and donorship in the church is therefore the explicit responsibility of leaders. Combined with the impressive work of volunteer persons it could really "move mountains".

Money are only means, serving a task, which is supposed to bring us closer to the realization of a great and bold vision born in the minds of leaders and communicated and internalized by the whole congregation. Therefore our mission needs to determine, how the money will be spent. Some questions could help:

- What amount of money is spent yearly for the maintenance of the status quo of the church?
- What amount is invested directly in front line mission?
- Do the priorities set in the church (which might be evangelism & mission) have also the bigger amount of money allotted?
- Does the financial management of the local church's resources confirm the priority of faith and mission?

3.2.9 Material Resource Management

Last, but not least, success in Christian leadership will be measured on how the leader and his team succeeds to manage material resources in the local church. A church needs good facilities in the best possible location. The place of worship communicates a lot about the worshiping people inside the church. A good church leader will be aware of this, and he will help the church to create a place that best represents our being, vision and mission, as well as a place people will feel good to come to. Remember David, who felt, that if he dwells in a palace, God's worship house should be even better (2 Samuel 7:1.2).

Further material resources for ministry itself will be important. The leadership team as well as the church members need good books for personal growth. They also need pamphlets, advertizing material, evangelistic aid sets, etc., to help them accomplish the church's task to spread the Gospel. An experienced leader will take care, that the "builders" will always have the needed "bricks", so that the Lord's house can be built without delay.

* * * * *

3.3. Service-Based Christian Leadership

"Yet it shall not be so among you;
 but whoever desires to become great among you,
 let him be your servant...
 ...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served,
 but to serve,
 and to give His life a ransom for many."
 Matthew 20:26.28

As a child Jesus manifested a peculiar loveliness of disposition. His willing hands were ever ready to serve others. He manifested a patience that nothing could disturb, and a truthfulness that would never sacrifice integrity. In principle firm as a rock, His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy. (AG 282.4)

Every business, no matter of its purpose, is based on service. Whether it is a productive business, a scientific business, an educational business, a leisure time business or something else: the worth of a business is measured by the quality of its service, and it becomes evident by the numbers sold.

Leadership in the church is service. As in all other businesses, the customer needs to have a key position, this is true. We have to reach our "customers" (people inside and outside the church) with our "product" (the message of God's redemptive offer), otherwise the church will lose its *raison d'être*. But there is also another one to be served: Jesus Christ. The church is not our own business, it is His "business." The awareness of this fact and its consequences in action is crucial to genuine Christian leadership. And this is decisive in church leadership.

The higher quality of Christian service may be found in the motivation of its workers. Experiencing the love of God in one's own life, and a deep appreciation for His self-sacrificing gift is one of the highest motivations for service.

The Principle of Service. Being different from the exact sciences (e.g. mathematics, physics, etc.), with clear formula and repeatable processes, leadership is an art with very sensitive and different ingredients. Leadership is more than the sum of leadership skills, training and vision. Leadership is a lifelong development art of leading people beyond the needs and desires made up by average persons. This demands a qualitatively new definition of leadership in the Christian context.

Speaking about Christian leadership, Harris W. Lee formulates: "Ministry is service, given in the name of Christ, on behalf or for the well-being of the church and its mission... Leadership is ministry when it works for renewal in the church." (Lee 1989, 24.25)

And Henri Nouwen puts it this way: “Christian leadership is called ministry precisely to express that in the service of others new life can be brought about. It is this service which gives eyes to see the flower breaking through the cracks in the street, ears to hear a word of forgiveness muted by hatred and hostility, and hands to feel new life under the cover of death and destruction.” (In: Lee 1989, 25)

Often people expect powerful leaders to compensate the people’s limitation of influence and change. They project to them their desires of sharp delimitations and safe, ordered zones expecting them to take measures they will never take if they were in this position of responsibility.

But as Christians we have other values. The basic characteristic of Christian leadership is not power, but service. Or let me put it this way: Power by service. In fact, leaders who best serve their church members, are the most powerful.

A Christian leader has to be aware, that there are two facets of service. When speaking about service there is the attitude and the action of service. While both are important, the first (attitude of service) is determinant in leadership, while the second (active service) will demonstrate the attitude in a visible form, and it will have its educational impact.

Jesus’ definition of leadership coincides mostly with service (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). Our Master is the best example to be followed: Jesus came into this world, not to be served, but to serve himself (Matthew 20: 26). If somebody wants to be a powerful leader, he needs to first become a servant (Matthew 23:11; Mark 10:43; Luke 22:26), and the most prominent among you needs to be your servant. Paul confesses to be “a servant of Christ among the gentiles” (Romans 15:16; Ephesians 3:7). He writes further: “I became Christ’s servant.” (Colosians 1:23.25.) And in 1 Timothy 4:6 Paul launches the appeal, that we also should become good servants of God.

To be a servant was at no time very popular, and it still isn’t today. But service is realistic, and biblical, and it is the best solution to the problem of unbalanced relationships, by which society is stricken today. Healing of interpersonal tensions, conflicts, and indifference will not be realized by a growing emphasis on the individual and his/her own needs, but by the principle of being first a servant of all.

Of course, there are also limits of being a servant. There are times, when a Christian leader has to decline requests, because he needs some rest, or time for his family, or because of other urgent evangelistic priorities. But this is not the major problem today. It is much more a challenge to be a real servant-leader, working hard, sometimes willing to “stay behind the scenes”, as Jesus points out. In a world concerned about “selling oneself good”, Christian leaders are called to demonstrate a willingness for respectful and unselfish service.

Unit 4: The Personal Dimension in Christian Leadership

4.1 A Biblical View of the Human in Christian Leadership

“Beloved, let us love one another,
for love is of God;
and everyone who loves is born of God
and knows God.”
1 John 4:7

By personal labor reach those around you. Become acquainted with them. Preaching will not do the work that needs to be done. Angels of God attend you to the dwellings of those you visit. This work cannot be done by proxy. Money lent or given will not accomplish it. Sermons will not do it. By visiting the people, talking, praying, sympathizing with them, you will win hearts. This is the highest missionary work that you can do. To do it, you will need resolute, persevering faith, unwearying patience, and a deep love for souls.--Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 41. (ChS 117.5)

Jesus Christ’s appreciation for people was simple, winning and imperative. There was a natural way people felt good being in His vicinity. All He did, His healing, his travelling and his preaching communicated the deep respect and the even deeper love for each person in particular. Concluding Jesus puts it this way: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34)

4.1.1 The Value of Human Beings

A unique value by creation. Through creation human beings inherited an infinite value of their life and existence. They exist not by chance, as evolutionists claim, but by design and divine plan. Each person is unique. People are beings designed to shape the present and the future and to care for their fellows, whether it meets their own interests or not. In the light of the Bible human beings have not been created only to fight for survival, but to find a meaning in life, and to develop toward a desirable, happy future.

Redemption creates infinite value of human life. Through redemption the value of human beings has got a new quality. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) Beings so worthy, that the Lord of the Universe is willing to sacrifice His only Son, are indeed special: their life be protected, they must be healed and helped, they must be lead to a better life in Christ.

God’s everlasting love determines an eternal value of human beings. God’s never ending love, demonstrates the eternal dimension of the value of human beings: “The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: “Yes, I have loved

you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.” (Jeremiah 31:3) Beloved people have a special status: they are respected, and they receive special care. Each person living in this world is the object of God’s love, thus having the right to be treated as valuable and as a son or daughter of God.

4.1.2 A Christian Leader’s Relationship to Human Beings

Appreciation. Our world has set secular criteria for appreciation of people: their income, their possessions, their level of being known etc. A Christian leader will appreciate each person, indifferent of social status, gender, race or wealth. A leader communicating his appreciation for the persons for their existence and heavenly design more than for their achievements will develop a very fertile atmosphere of mutual appreciation in the church and among its leadership team.

Respect. The better people get acquainted to each other, the less they tend to respect each other. Why? From my president I learned a very valuable lesson: Each time he is presenting or introducing a new person, he speaks of something outstanding in their biography. And I discovered, that every person has something outstanding. The reaction: a growing respect for people. Respect is a helpful ingredient in Christian leadership. It will determine, what we say and what not about other persons, it will also determine how we meet people, how we deal with them and how we support them in their responsibilities.

Love. In a world of inflationary use of love some people feel uncomfortable speaking about love. But love for people is a presupposition for Christian leadership. A person that loves programs and projects, computers and change, but does not really love people from the depth of his/her heart, is not suitable for a leadership position. Don’t make a mistake: love is not sympathy, love is not respect - it is a lasting principle followed by lasting emotions. It is something, that helps the leader to step back and let others get the applause. It is something, that helps the leader fighting for the cause of others, sacrificing energy and time to make others happy. It is the power, that changes the world. (1 Corinthians 13)

Forgiveness. In a perfect world like the postmodern there is no place for forgiveness. Either the performance is good, or the performer is fired. In Christian leadership forgiveness is a priority ingredient. Loving and appreciating people, forgiving their mistakes and even their failures helps to develop high quality and lasting relationships within the leadership team as well as among the leaders and the church members.

Confidence. To accomplish this, it is necessary to systematically build up confidence among believers. Every relationship demands an advance of confidence, in order to be able to grow. It is like in agriculture:

Sowing the seed into the earth, the farmer does it with confidence/trust, that

one day new plants will come out. A positive atmosphere in the church will only be possible, if people are willing to invest confidence.

Building bridges. Another element promoting an atmosphere of appreciation and respect is the honest effort to unite forces in the church. The leader's task is mediation, bringing people together with their very different backgrounds and desires. A good leader will be a successful mediator between the young and the old generation in the church, between tradition oriented and innovative people, between very well trained and simple people, between strong and weak personalities. It is a failure of leadership, if polarization is developing unhindered within the church.

Now, bringing people together is not easy and it sometimes creates a lot of pain. But it is possible. The twelve disciples were as different as people can ever be. However, they grew a team that changed the face of the world. It is worth to invest some thinking energy, to find a successful way to accomplish unity, rather than always playing the fireman just trying to keep things somehow quiet. Jesus states, that an essential element of identifying God's church is unity (John 17:19) Therefore it is worth the effort to create an atmosphere in the church that allows no alternative, but unity.

Maybe we now discovered, that a leader's job is not to just react to different happenings in the church, but to take himself initiative and to actively model and shape the church. Creating a positive atmosphere of appreciation and respect among believers will represent one of the visible characteristics of a successful leader.

4.1.3 Helping People to Develop

4.1.3.1 Seeing the possibilities of people

Jesus has always been concerned to help His disciples to develop. Again and again He managed to direct their intentions and desires, so differently shaped, toward one common goal. He was successful, because He always saw something good in the people surrounding Him: "Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to His kingdom." (DA 151.2)

A successful leader will always see the possibilities and promising elements in people he will be working with. The competency and authority of a leader depends a lot of his knowledge about people, and the ability to see more of their qualities than other surrounding people or even the people concerned themselves. Often talented people are neglected, because they never had an opportunity to develop their talents and because their possibilities have never been detected. A good leader will develop a feeling for this and he will surprise people by promoting the growth of these people with hidden talents.

4.1.3.2 Mentoring people

One can learn a lot by reading books, but the decisive elements of success in leadership can be transmitted only through close relationships, from person to person. Mentoring is this kind of close relationship.

Trying to define mentoring one discovers that it is made of two elements: relationship and transmission of experience. "Mentoring is based on a personal relationship, through which a person enriches another one by helping him to use godly sources of power." (Stanley, Clinton 1994, 31) Another definition writes: "Mentoring ... is a dynamic relationship of trust in which one person enables another to maximise the grace of God in his/her life and service. It has a sound biblical and theological basis with Jesus as the ultimate model, retaining all that is consistent with his life and theological basis with Jesus as the ultimate model, retaining all that is consistent with his life and teaching." (Mallison, 1998)

People need mentors. Studies revealed that every leader had between three and ten people who had a decisive impact on their personal development. (Stanley, Clinton 1994, 31) Church leaders are called to be good mentors in the church.

Mentoring is a method present throughout Bible history and it still works today. It has always been a reality in society's life. Parents play a major role in the development of their children, teachers form to a great extent students and apprentices, top sportsmen always had certain role models and coaches to train them. In business, education and public life mentoring is a reality. And it definitely needs to be this way in the Christian church.

The work of mentors. What does a mentor do? Here are some of the aspects of the work and actions of a mentor:

- "Capacity to discover the potential existing within a person
- Being tolerant with regard to the mistakes, ruins, scrapes, and similar things,
- because one sees the potential, which can be developed
- Flexibility in order to react on people and circumstances
- Patience, knowing that development needs time and experience
- Perspective, which results from the vision and the ability one has, to overview the way up to the end, and to suggest steps to be followed by the mentored person
- Encouraging gifts and skills which build up others"

(Stanley, Clinton 1994, 32)

A special kind of mentoring is represented by spiritual leaders. "The main contribution of a spiritual leader is responsibility, questions on decisions and understanding, the binding character and the direction of the spiritual life (inner motivation) and the maturity (coincidence of truth and life). Simply said, a spiritual

leader facilitates the spiritual development and maturity at certain critical points of the life of the disciple." (Stanley, Clinton 1994, 55.56)

A spiritual partnership. Exactly said, mentoring and being mentored is a spiritual partnership. And this is a precious heritage from the days of the early church described in the Acts of the Apostles. Barnabas & Paul, Paul & Timothy, etc. have been successful teams in preaching the Gospel. God created human beings with the ability but also with the necessity to build up and maintain relationships to other human beings. The same happened with the establishment of the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ: being a child of God, one has a lot of brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers in the church. Mentoring is such a spiritual partnership in many aspects.

First of all, a Christian leader needs himself mentoring. If he has to help others grow, he must himself grow first. Because he needs motivation, because of the need to experience the empowerment by the Holy Spirit, a leader will use himself very careful the opportunities opened for mentoring. Retired ministers and church elders have a lot of experience and wisdom of life: it is wise to use the opportunity to learn from them.

Secondly, team members need mentoring. They also want to continuously fill up their life cups with gifts and skills they need in their ministry. They certainly know, that stagnation means death, spiritually as well as professionally, so they are very interested to keep up with a lifelong process of personal and spiritual growth.

Thirdly, every church member needs mentoring. To keep a burning fire in mission and to promote enthusiasm regarding faith and the Gospel, every church member needs a role model to identify with, and they need persons, under whose influence they can grow spiritually and personally. This is in fact the secret of successfully recruiting church leadership members as well as future ministers. (Almost every minister confessed, that spiritual role models, spiritual mentors, have decisively influenced their decision for ministry).

How to find out, if you are the "mentor"-type of person? In the following you will find a list of attitudes, skills and tools for mentoring:

- C Prayer plays a crucial role. It is the heart of success in mentoring.
- C The Bible is the main mentoring resource. In order to avoid onesidedness through the secularization of a spiritual process, mentoring should always use the Bible as its primary development resource.
- C Journalling is another tool which helps to make mentoring successful. Besides being a reminder, it helps to overview processes and make the mentor aware of them.
- C Defining clearly the relationship is necessary, in order not to raise unjustified expectations.

- C Asking good questions is a specific skill of a successful mentor. Questions tend to lead to real conversations. Good questions lead soon to deep conversations, yet maintaining a sensible approach.
- C Practicing the habit of listening will make mentoring even more effective, because no precious time is lost in misunderstandings. And, at least, only good listeners can really successful mentor.

4.1.3.3 Giving people an opportunity to work and develop

A genuine, self-sacrificing, deep concern about the development and well being of each member and visitor in the church will create a general atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation, rather than a suspicious, critical approach to the very different and unique people present in the church.

Caring for people will also have an immense evangelistic impact. If visitors feel, that we are interested in themselves as persons rather than in the fact of enlarging the membership of the church, this will facilitate their decision to join the church they experience so positively.

Getting to know people, remembering their birth day as well as their baptismal day, knowing and talking to them about major events in their families as well as in their personal life, praying for them, calling them, visiting them, encouraging them with their faith - all these experiences will motivate people to actively participate in the life of the church and to identify themselves with the church they once chose as their own. Give people an opportunity to demonstrate their change and commitment. Give them responsibilities and help them to develop.

The best and most successful leaders are those who become replaceable. It gives evidence of a true vision, of broad thinking and of long range planning, if a leader starts to build up followers as soon as he is given the leadership responsibility.

* * * * *

4.2 Wholeness & Commitment in Christian Leadership

“These things I have spoken to you,
that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”
John 15:11

The heart of the true minister is filled with an intense longing to save souls. Time and strength are spent, toilsome effort is not shunned; for others must hear the truths that brought to his own soul such gladness and peace and joy. The Spirit of Christ rests upon him. He watches for souls as one that must give an account. With his eyes fixed on the cross of Calvary, beholding the uplifted Saviour, relying on His grace, believing that He will be with him until the end, as his shield, his strength, his efficiency, he works for God. With invitations and pleadings, mingled with the assurances of God's love, he seeks to win souls to Jesus, and in heaven he is numbered among those who are "called, and chosen, and faithful." Revelation 17:14. (AA 371.1)

One day, somebody told Jesus about the decision to follow Him, but asked for the time to give a farewell party in his home. Jesus replied: “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Christian leadership is a matter of total commitment or nothing at all. One cannot half be saved, as well as “no one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). Jesus Christ asks for a total commitment to the Lord and to His church.

This means that for an Adventist leader at least three elements of leadership will converge toward a total commitment: (a) absolute submission under Jesus Christ and His revealed Word, the Holy Scriptures, (b) a honest attitude of identity and loyalty with the church a leader serves, and (c) a Holy Spirit driven personality.

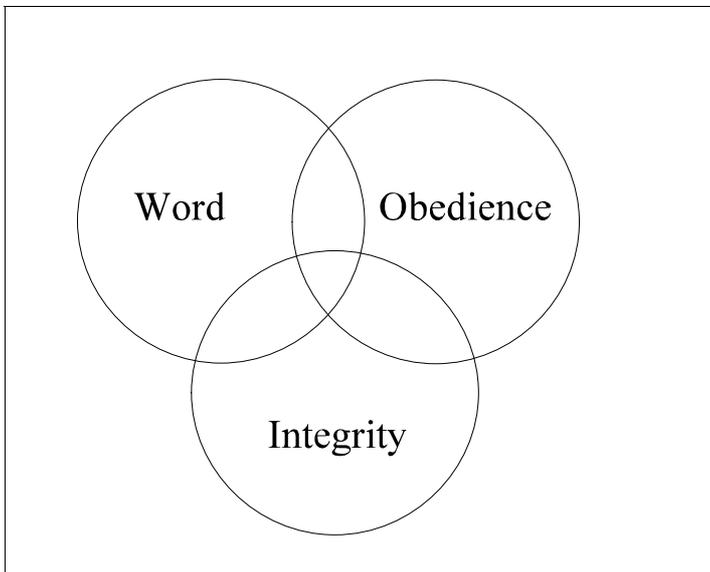
Leadership is working whole-heartedly and joyfully to implement a *great* vision of a *great* task in a *great* congregation for a *great* future our *great* God promised through Jesus Christ.

But is leadership indeed something one can enjoy? God certainly does not intend to condemn people to suffering when calling them to leadership. On the contrary: God intends to make leaders partners sharing His joy. (See Luke 15:22-24). He created a marvellous nature to enthrill people, to feel harmony and happiness, and the same is possible and maybe even desired with church leadership. The following five elements might help a Christian leader to enjoy his work:

8. Let God be the primary source of your strength and joy.
9. Remember, that it is God's church, not yours, and that He is in control of His church.

10. Become aware of God's redemptive love for you personally.
Then you will be able to treat people with love and forgiveness.
11. Build bridges between people.
Helping people to become friends, you will also get many new friends.
12. Develop common projects for the believers in the congregation.
These will tie people together.
Mission is the most comprehensive project in the church to accomplish this.

J. Robert Clinton suggests a "personal check" related to the individual's commitment to leadership. It will be able to reveal the degree of wholeness of commitment in church leadership.



J. Robert Clinton: *The Making of a Leader*, 73.

Finally, to be a Christian leader is not a matter of self-realization, but a matter of responding to God's call and the confirmation of the church. And it is true: there is no other activity in the world, that brings more satisfaction and joy in the life of people, than leading people to personal and spiritual growth as well as shaping the face of spiritually and numerically growing churches which thus become a blessing for its members as well as for the society.

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4.3. A Balanced Life Philosophy in Christian Leadership

“We give thanks to God always for you all,
making mention of you in our prayers,
remembering without ceasing
your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope
in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father.”
1 Thessalonians 1:2.3

The great motive powers of the soul are faith, hope, and love... In its record of the men who walked with God, we may catch glimpses of His glory. In the One "altogether lovely" we behold Him, of whom all beauty of earth and heaven is but a dim reflection. "I, if I be lifted up," He said, "will draw all men unto Me." John 12:32.(Ed 192.)

In general, plenty of effort is invested to teach people a helpful package of skill, telling them how to ...lead, ...manage, ...communicate, ...care, etc. In this context a very crucial issue is often neglected: the person of the leader himself. His personality, his attitudes, his fears and hopes, his development, - to make it short: his view of life.

4.3.1 The Importance of the Leader's Person

In the Bible very often great care is given to the person of the leader himself. Paul, writing to Timothy, gets right to the point:

“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity... Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1 Timothy 4:12-16)

David's call to being Israel's king reveals the same primary concern about the person of the future leader, and not about his skills and qualification, as important they might be:

“But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see as man sees*; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

In the context of the New Testament, speaking of the deacons and the church elders, we read:

“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” (Acts 6:7)

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach.” (1 Timothy 3:2)

“For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money.” (Titus 1:7)

Being exposed to the look of the people, being in a highly influential position those who choose the leader as well as the person accepting the call to

leadership bear a great responsibility.

4.3.2 The Life Philosophy of the Leader

In Christian leadership the personal life philosophy is an important ingredient with far reaching consequences for the leader himself as well as for the congregation. It could be difficult to lead a church toward growth and a deeper spirituality, if the personal life philosophy is contrasting these goals. Thus it becomes necessary to clearly define one's own personal life philosophy.

Some questions could help in this process:

- What do you think is the ultimate sense of life in this world?
- How would you formulate the importance of this immanent life?
- What role plays eternal life in your thoughts and planning?
- How would you describe your responsibility on this earth as a Christian?
- Do you have an optimistic or a rather pessimistic approach to life?
- How important are human relationships in your life?
- What is the role of social events (time spent with others) in your life?
- What is your opinion about giving other people priority, if necessary even being disposed to bring personal sacrifice?

Congruence of personal life philosophy with the Biblical principles and values of Christian life will substantially contribute to the spiritual and psychical survival of the leader. Diversity and uniqueness of persons is a matter of divine design. A successful leader needs to be aware of it and to accept it. But generally speaking optimism, friendship, caring for others, etc. are core characteristics regarding the responsibility of a leader.

4.3.3 The Leader's Personal Development

No leader can survive tomorrow with the knowledge and skills of yesterday. A leader needs permanent personal development, knowing and loving tradition while being open for the new. Here are some suggestions, on how a leader can keep up growing and developing his professional skills:

- **Search regularly for information.**
A leader must be well informed. He needs to know the newest developments. It is helpful for him to follow public discussions and assessments regarding our society. The most exigent newspapers, magazines and new media means will be a good source of information. As far as the church is concerned, serious news sources will keep the leader well informed and balanced.
- **Read often.**
Reading a good book is like an open window to a new world. Rather than giving quick informations, like the daily media, a good quality book opens the eyes for a broader understanding of complex systems and it can animate the thoughts to develop own new

ideas and projects.

- **Develop interest for new ideas and projects.**
Only people open to change will also undergo change. Remember: growth is change. Not all, that is new is necessarily good and desirable, but good changes need to be intentionally implemented and openness to the new can promote this process.
- **Cultivate good quality contacts.**
Some people are afraid of spending time with prominent people. This must not be. From specialists you can learn a lot of things in the shortest time. Be honest, decent and use the opportunity to be in contact also with people that are superior to you.
- **Use dialog as a matter of development, knowledge and help**
Dialog is an important issue in Christian leadership. It helps to better understand people, to keep up with developments, to get important information, to get feed-back and evaluation as well as a matter of council. And it helps to develop new own ideas during discussions.
- **Visit training seminars on a regular basis.**
Training seminars have the advantage of uniting several elements like: contacts, dialog, specific professional information, learning setting etc. Seminars are useful for the approfundation of professional knowledge.
- **Consider the possibility of having a professional renewal phase each couple of years.**
During the years routine is creating some kind of "enterprise blindness". If it is possible, take some coherent time to renew the professional commitment and skills, like participating in a Bible Study Tour, following a continuing education course at a university, etc. This could give new, refreshing impulses to your ministry

4.3.4 The Leader's Personal World

Several years ago I stopped thinking of church leaders and ministers as individuals, as single persons. Church leaders are always part of the "system called family". A Christian leader will be aware of this fact and his family and friends will always be part of his vision, mission and ministry. Leaders can be more effective and less in danger of loneliness, burnout and failure, if they minister as a family. Rather than being a duty it is a priviledge to take time and to care for the partner and the children. Leaders have also the unique priviledge to involve their family and friends in the most satisfying activity of the world: serving God, the church and humanity. A Christian leader will first be a leader, a mentor, a supporter to his family and friends.

4.3.5 Personal Life Management

Another important issue for leaders ist their personal life management. Sometimes there are so many things to do, so many problems to solve, that the leader "has no time to live". If this happens, the leader is on a risky track and in danger to loose the joy of being a leader besides the loss of the family, his health

and the own meaning in life. So if a leader wants to lead others he/she first has to succeed managing well the own life resources.

This includes mental development and fitness as well as physical health, health prevention and health care. It includes a good management of family relationships as well as care for friendships. And it certainly includes spiritual vitality and health. It is like leading an orchestra: many different instruments need to play together in harmony. It is not an easy task, but with God's help and a strong support of friends and family it is possible to succeed to learn the fine art of living.

* * * * *

Summary

One of the most brilliant leaders in Israel, David, wrote a song inspiring generations throughout the centuries: "The Lord takes care of me as his sheep; I will not be without any good thing... He gives new life to my soul: he is my guide in the ways of righteousness because of his name. Yes, though I go through the valley of deep shade, I will have no fear of evil; for you are with me, your rod and your support are my comfort." (Psalm 23:1.3.4 BBE) Leading and being lead - this is the life of leaders.

During this course we dealt with some of the aspects of the very large and complex area of Christian leadership. To practice a balanced, wholistic leadership it will be important to integrate the different aspects of leadership like the spiritual, the relational, the professional and the personal dimension. The fine art of leadership consists of creating something special and unique out of the commonly known ingredients.

My prayer is, that God may lead many of His children to develop toward effective and mature leaders in the church they love, respect and appreciate. If this book could be of help accomplishing this task, I would like to thank God for this.

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As epilog there has been included a short presentation about unity in the

church. It seems so crucial for a successful yet balanced leadership, that church leaders could probably take profit of it.

The Christian Trade Mark of Unity

“That they all may be one,
as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You;
that they also may be one in Us,
that the world may believe that You sent Me.”
John 17:21

To the early church had been entrusted a constantly enlarging work--that of establishing centers of light and blessing wherever there were honest souls willing to give themselves to the service of Christ. The proclamation of the gospel was to be world-wide in its extent, and the messengers of the cross could not hope to fulfill their important mission unless they should remain united in the bonds of Christian unity, and thus reveal to the world that they were one with Christ in God. (AA 89.4)

In His high-priestly prayer Jesus emphasizes unity as a central element in the life of the Christian church. (John 17:17) It is not only a possible side-effect of following Him, but it is a central mark of recognition, that the church is indeed God's church. Thus unity becomes in the New Testament a Christian trade mark.

This fact implies consequences for many different areas of church work. Especially the local church will strive for unity. We all know, that individualism as well as human nature itself tend towards splitting. But Jesus makes it clear, that unity is a must for His followers. In the church there are different views and also different interests. The task of the leader will be to create an atmosphere of unity. A Christian leader must be known by being a person who is building bridges between people. Unity is not something, that can be ordered, nor can it be imposed. Unity is like a growing plant: it has to be watered and nurtured. And it needs plenty of patience to produce success.

Like the unity of the Godhead, also Christ's church has to bear the mark of unity. For the Seventh-day Adventist church it is so important, that a distinct chapter in the 27 Fundamental Beliefs was dedicated to unity: “We are equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.” (Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No 13)

The disciples' preparation for Pentecost was made of training and practice for unity in the upper room. After Jesus' ascension, they “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.” (Acts 1:14.) And they continued to do so until the day of Pentecost came. “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.” (Acts 2:1.2.) What happened then was miracle after miracle.

Unity is essential to the church for accomplishing its mission. Only with joined efforts, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the church will reach every corner of the world with the Good News of redemption through Jesus Christ. And only working in unity the church will give evidence of the reconciling power of the Gospel; since redemption means a re-unification of human beings with their Creator.

It is worth making every effort to promote unity in the church. Avoiding any divisive attitude, a leader will encourage every effort for unity in the church. He will strive and work for bringing people together. Accepting and enjoying the fact, that we all are God's family, unity will get priority before personal wishes and ideas.

But unity never can mean uniformity. If the common bases of faith is strong enough, there will be plenty of space for creative and innovative development within the church. Diversity is necessary in order to ensure the growth of the church. We need people with different talents, we need people with different points of view, we need people with different positive attitudes. Unity will certainly develop better in an environment of diversity, if there is an expressed will for unity and if the submission to the common goal of proclaiming the gospel will have priority. Diversity is a blessing, when it appears combined with a strong team-spirit in the church.

A Christian leader will be aware of the different ways to establish unity in the church and he will work to implement them. Promoting unity by speech and action, promoting unity in the families that constitute the church will certainly change the face of the church.

The leader must know, that unity is a very sensible plant. It is rooted in trust and confidence and therefore susceptible to every kind of manipulation. But well nourished and cared for confidence and trust will last.

Unity needs also to develop a worldwide view. Every field will develop its own specific way of church life and culture is an important ingredient as far as forms are concerned. But many achievements of our church would never have come true, if we were not a united, worldwide church. The Adventist education system, the Adventist health system, ADRA, and especially the tremendous church growth worldwide would never have been possible without the worldwide unity of this marvellous church. Unity is one of the keys to success.

Finally, unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit toward serving people. In Ephesians Paul writes of the spiritual gifts given to develop "the unity of the Spirit" and this leads the church to "the unity of faith." (Eph. 4:3.13.) A united church will therefore not only be a faithful witness for God's reconciling message to the world, but it will also demonstrate the spiritual attitude of both, the leaders and the membership of a congregation uniting them in faith and action.

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