PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY & LEADERSHIP

BIBLICAL STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Those of us who have been given the privilege of leadership among God’s people have the responsibility to be exemplary in our relationships both with God and those with whom we are called to serve. The New Testament recognized the importance of leadership setting the pace for blamelessness and Christian maturity. To lead people into a meaningful life of worship (that is, the recognition of who God is and the submission of self in humility to God), the leader’s life must be one of mature spiritual quality. Though perfection is not demanded, a life that is exemplary and committed to God’s priorities is required. Cf. Acts 6:3; 1 Tim 3:12-13; 4:11-14.

The Bible recognizes that leaders are servants. As such, they exercise their leadership for the benefit of others, not themselves. Cf. 1 Kings 12:7; Matt 20:20-28; 22:34-40.

The Bible recognizes that leaders set the example. They must exhibit a life that is firmly committed to Christ – above reproach and offense – and loyal to the posture of the church, so that their ministry is influential and open to all in body of Christ. Cf. Heb 13:7-8.

PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP

Max Depree is a committed Christian and president of Herman Miller, Inc., America’s premier office furniture business. His company has long been on the list of the “100 Best Companies to Work for in America.” He is the author of two “best selling books” – “The Art of Leadership” and “Leading Without Power.” In his “Power” book Max emphasizes the importance of “seeing value in every employee.” Historically, the long term success of any organization is attained only when leaders see each staff person having an integral part in the bigger picture. Employees who invest their time and energies in an organization want to feel they’ve had input in its successes, and fully expect to assume some of the responsibility for its failures. Feeling a part of the team energizes people, helps them overlook the frailties of management, and motivates them to go the extra mile.

“Leaders have no power,” states DePree, “apart from the trust others have placed in them,” so the key to successful leadership is influence, not authority. That means trust is ultimately dependent on respect, where everyone in the organization is taken seriously. . . and this is only accomplished when leaders realize the value of partnering with their staff rather than dominating them. This is how you inspire staff to do their very best. Following are some practical suggestions toward creating a "valued feeling" among all staff members:

1. **Hire partners, not just staff.** Look for people to hire who will partner with you in ministry – those who expect more from the job than just a paycheck.
2. **Be open with your staff.** Avoid a veil of secrecy. All staff are adults and like knowing the thinking of leaders, even those ideas that cannot be implemented.
3. **Recognize your staff.** A job “well done” needs to be recognized and rewarded. Give them thoughtful “perks” – a surprise free lunch or an afternoon off.
4. **Relate personally to your staff.** From time to time, meet with all levels of your staff individually, and “listen carefully” to them to see how they’re doing.
5. **Express appreciation to your staff.** Send them notes or verbalize your appreciation for their work. It creates a climate of trust and value.
6. **Encourage feedback from your staff.** None of us has a monopoly on ideas or how ministry can be made more effective. This encourages creativity.
7. **Create a team mentality with your staff.** This means being “inclusive” with decision-making whenever possible (not “exclusive”). Again, feeling a part of the team energizes people and motivates them to “own” the ministry as well.

**LEADERSHIP & TRUST**

“The single most important factor that will determine the success or failure of any organization is trust.” – *Warren Bennis, Harvard Business School*

“Trust is the key to the speed of our growth.” – *David Neeleman, CEO Jet Blue Airways*

“Lack of trust within an organization saps its energy, fosters a climate of suspicion, and completely devastates teamwork.” – *Koh Boon Hwee, Pres of Singapore Airlines*

“Trust is the foundation of all relationships.” – *John Maxwell, INJOY Ministries*

“Low trust causes friction, whether it is caused by unethical behavior or incompetent behavior. Simply put, trust means confidence; the opposite of trust (distrust) is suspicion. You cannot have success without trust” – *Jim Burke, CEO Johnson & Johnson*

“Leadership is getting results in a way that inspires trust.” – *Steven Covey, author*

**SIX PERSONAL QUALITIES of LEADERSHIP** – *Warren Bennis, Harvard Business School*

1. **Integrity** – It means alignment of words and actions with inner values, and sticking with these values even when another path may be more advantageous.
2. **Dedication** – It means spending whatever time and energy on a task is required to get the job done, rather than giving it whatever time you have available.
3. **Magnanimity** – A magnanimous person gives credit where it is due. It also means being gracious in defeat and allowing those defeated to retain their dignity.
4. **Humility** – It means recognizing that you are not inherently superior to others, and consequently, that they are not inferior to you.
5. **Openness** – It means being able to listen to ideas that are outside one’s current mental models, being able to suspend judgment until you’ve heard another’s ideas.
6. **Creativity** – It means thinking differently, being able to get outside the box and take a new and different viewpoint on things.

**KEY QUOTES ON MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP**

“The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. It’s got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can’t blow an uncertain trumpet.” – *Rev. T. M. Hesburgh, President Emeritus, Univ of Notre Dame*

“I’m not in the business of making steel. I’m in the business of building men. They make steel.” – *Andrew Carnegie*

“There are only three rules of sound administration: 1) pick good men and women, 2) tell them not to cut corners, and 3) back them to the limit. By the way, picking good men and women is the most important.” – *Adlai Stevenson*

“The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say ‘thank you.’ In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor.” – *Max DePree*

“Everyone has an invisible sign hanging from his or her neck saying, ‘Make Me Feel Important!’ Never forget this message when working with people.” – *Mary Kay Ash*
OTHER THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

The most effective leader is one who leads by example, not by edict. Nearly 90% of how people learn is visual – what they see; another 9% is verbal – what they hear; 1% through our other senses. That alone explains why effective leadership is more caught than taught. People need to see it, more than hear it, to really embrace it.

Walt Disney said there are three kinds of people: Well-poisoners discourage others; Lawn-mowers have good intentions but are self-absorbed; Life-enhancers reach out to enrich the lives of others.

Nordstrom’s #1 Rule for their Employees – Use your good judgment in all situations; there are no additional rules! Nordstrom stores emphasize people. . . not policies!

Wisdom from John Maxwell – A life isn’t significant except for its impact on other lives. And. . . the only inheritance a man will leave that has eternal value is his influence.

PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING CHURCH MINISTRY

Major “changes in ministry” need to be based on the needs of the entire congregation, not just the preferences of a select few, or even a majority. For example, if God has entrusted a particular constituent to a church (for example: 300 seniors), the church needs to faithfully serve that constituent – not ignore it or wish it would go away – because one day they will have to “give an account” for what God entrusted to them; the key issue is being “trustworthy” (1 Cor 4:2).

Though most major decisions made by churches are difficult ones, and are seldom made with “wrong motives” or “bad intentions,” nevertheless, they may not be the “correct decisions.” The impact upon every segment of the congregation always needs to be carefully considered.

The prevalent philosophy among church leaders across the country is “not to change” things that are working for you; not to make “major changes” to things that got you to where you are. When this philosophy is ignored it frequently produces negative results. Growing a church is “difficult” enough, so as a general rule, leaders are encouraged not to mess with success if at all possible.

If major changes are necessary, they need to be orchestrated “very carefully.” When major decisions are made hastily, they will almost always be received by a significant number of people as a “negative.” People are “creatures of habit” and generally don’t like change. That doesn’t mean changes should never be made, but they need to be made carefully and with extreme caution.

The “desires and needs of the flock” should determine what changes should be made. When one ignores a major constituent within the church, you’re generally in trouble. The preferences of the shepherd should not be the determining factor – if he’s a sensitive shepherd, he will be more interested in meeting the needs and desires of the sheep than his own.

The Senior Pastor’s “persona” ultimately becomes the dominant influence in a church, and rightly so, because he occupies the highest position of influence. Obviously, the persona of pastors will differ from one pastor to the next and one church to the next – some are high energy, others not. . . some are young & vibrant, others not. . . some are very outgoing, others not. . . some are very cerebral, others not. . . some are highly relational, others not. . . some are serene, others not; etc. It should be remembered that God is the author of the pastor’s “personality” – as such, God will use it to attract a given constituent that He wants the church to attract; be grateful for that calling. A pastor’s personality is neither negative or positive –
whatever his personality type, the church needs to embrace it and maximize its effectiveness. To “fire” a pastor because you don’t like his personality smacks of pride and elitism.

With power (“authority”) comes responsibility. Some people naturally gravitate to positions of power in a church. However, when the basic structure of church government is effectuated in a “power grab,” it frequently produces a drastic change in the operational structure of a church – be it good or bad. The questions “power brokers” need to ask themselves are these: Do they know how to carry out God’s mandate for the church? Do they have the necessary gifts to do so? Do they have the wherewithal to do the work that needs to be done? Have they considered the “negative fall-out” by making such a move? Are they able to handle the negative criticism that often comes with that kind of change? Frequently, power grabs result in people “getting in over their heads” – not counting the cost – as such, they exit the church, and leave it to others to clean up the mess they made. Can power brokers successfully pull it off effectively? Yes, provided they possess the spiritual integrity, competence, training, giftedness, servant’s heart, commitment, and work ethic needed to see that ministry gets done right. That is a huge responsibility they are putting on their shoulders – one they may seriously underestimate. Smart “A-type personalities” frequently like to get into the “power-mix” of an organization, because they [naturally] think they can do things as good or better than anyone else (and oftentimes they can). This routinely takes place in all kinds of organizations, and isn’t necessarily a negative; but in a church it can really be problematic if they are not prepared to give the kind of time and energy it takes to effectively do the work of ministry. There are a number of ways to run a church – that’s why scripture is silent on teaching one particular way. Different methods no doubt work better in different contexts and settings. The important thing here is that the leadership of a church (whoever that may be) needs to be fully-equipped, competent, prepared and willing to do the work of ministry. In consulting with other churches I frequently put it this way: Whoever you hire, make sure they 1) know what to do; 2) know how to do it; 3) have the wherewithal to get it done.

Anytime you have large segments of a congregation “leaving a church body,” you experience a tearing apart of the very fabric of the church (relationships), and those kinds of wounds are not only difficult to mend, they take a considerable amount of time to do so. In such situations, the [next] pastor should serve as God’s agent for healing and health, so that once the church becomes “healthy” again, it can move forward unhindered.

Large effective churches require spiritual, experienced, energetic, enthusiastic, vibrant, God-directed leadership. All large “Spirit-led” vibrant churches have this kind of leadership. This isn’t to say that all churches need to be large vibrant churches. But if the church is poised to be one – does its history, facilities, debt structure, demographics, and location point in that direction? – then it should seek out the kind of leadership that will establish it as such.

Church staffs are motivated and inspired by the Senior Pastor & Executive Pastor. Leadership starts at the “top” – that’s the “focal point” for the overall health of any organization, and not just anyone can provide that kind of leadership. A staff that is motivated and inspired to do the work of ministry, will in turn pass on to their subordinates the kinds of attitudes and values that make for fruitful ministry.

Lethargy is unacceptable by staff members. Lethargy is like cancer – it spreads and damages ministry; if it is not corrected or removed it will ultimately cause irreparable harm to the entire ministry. The message here is this – if ministry is not a person’s “passion,” then he or she needs to step down or be removed. If ministry is simply a “job” that pays the bills for someone, they are miscast and need to find another kind of work to do – because ministry is a “lousy job!” It’s a “great job” if ministry is your passion, but it’s a "lousy job" if it is not. Ministry requires far more from people than just their time and effort; it requires “divine energy” that
comes from a heart for God. That's why so many highly effective pastors work so many hours; they love God's work and the people they serve.

**High-energy staff meetings need to be held every week.** Why? It is here where senior leadership has its greatest impact upon the staff. . . where the staff is trained for more effective ministry. . . where the philosophy of ministry is developed and explained. . . where they see the way things are done (the nuts and bolts of ministry), the way decisions are made, the importance of divine input (Spirit-led ministry), the way to handle negatives/problems, the way to serve and love people, the way to work smart, and a host of other issues. You don't learn these things in isolation, sitting down reading a book, or taking a class – it's like learning a "sport," you have to play the game under the watchful eye of a coach. By the way, if your coach (mentor) isn't worth his salt, he's not going to make much of a contribution to your life and ministry.

Ministry is “hard work” and demands everything the individual possesses – it demands “all of you.” If ministry is the person’s “passion,” this isn’t a problem – but if it's not his passion, then it’s a big problem. It’s the same thing with being a “Christian” – either God has “all of you,” or you’re really going to be miserable in your Christian life. The fact is, spiritual development is hard enough when your priorities are right; when they are askew, essentially it’s impossible and will only leave you spiritually depressed.

The primary element in the church is the “sheep” – not the shepherds. The church, literally are the “called-out ones;” the emphasis is always on the sheep; the shepherds exist for the sheep, the sheep don’t exist for the shepherds. The sheep aren’t called to serve the shepherds; the shepherds are called to “serve the sheep” (cf. John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2). Conversely, the sheep don't lay down their lives for the shepherds; the shepherds lay down their lives for the sheep – so, the “sacrificial giving” that takes place in this relationship is that of the shepherds for the sheep. The sheep are our “business” – they are not used as slaves for our own selfish ambitions; the sheep are our “ambition.” We are in the “disciple-development” business – making Christ-like people. When we lose sight of that objective, we put the cart before the horse. Therefore, as shepherds and leaders of the church we need to remember that the business of the church is people – not programs, methods, strategies, buildings, or status – the business of the church is developing followers of Christ. It’s been said a million times in church seminars everywhere – “always keep the ‘main thing’ the main thing!”

Where there is a need for confession and reconciliation in the church, it must be done. The church cannot become a harbinger of disharmony, feuding, bitterness and unforgiveness; obviously, God won’t honor it. In actuality, He will bring judgment against it until it is dealt with rightly. One of the problems that accompanies “sin” in the church – that is, sin that is consistently practiced and not dealt with – is that the “spirit” of the church is negatively impacted. So the need to deal with sin and make it a thing of the past is paramount to developing a positive, vibrant spiritual community.
FIVE WINDOWS INTO THE 21st CENTURY CHURCH

About ten years ago I had the opportunity to attend a special forum in southern California sponsored by the Christian organization, "Leadership Network." The main speakers were Peter Drucker (the world’s foremost authority on management, and a committed Christian), and Lyle Schaller (Dean of Church Consultants at "Leadership Network"). The purpose of the forum was to take a look at the 21st century church. They foresaw the church as having five important core characteristics:

1. **Effective Leadership** – Leadership is shifting toward a gift-based partnership between the pastor, staff and lay leadership. Leadership is also becoming more decentralized, in that it is shifting from the pastor and staff as doers of ministry to being equippers of others in ministry. The source of the leader's abilities flows from an authentic relationship with God, their inner character, and a willingness to be transparent with others.

2. **Lay Mobilization** – There is a high value placed on lay mobilization with each person seen as having a gift, role and place to serve. Mobilization is implemented by a leadership team with a specific point person. The perspective is one of “whole life ministry” with people using their gifts to serve others not only in the church, but also with family, work, community, and the world.

3. **Cultural Connectedness** – The changing 21st century population is set in the context of an age of mission and a society in which the influence of Christianity is declining. The 21st century is becoming far more global, urban, and multi-cultural. Furthermore, 21st century leaders and churches understand and engage the culture at its "points of need," customizing their worship (making it more authentic and transcendent), teaching, outreach and ministries according to their specific cultural and demographic setting.

4. **Authentic Community** – Ministry is customized for people as individuals and is driven by people needs and opportunities, not programs. Community is fostered through small groups for purposes of caring, learning, support, ministry and accountability. There are multiple points of entry and service. There is a recognition of multiple stages of faith development and a process in place that fosters individual growth and maturity at each stage. There is an emphasis on disciple-making, worship and prayer, and a sense of holy adventure that the congregation is on a journey to discover where God is active and join with Him in His work, both locally and globally.

5. **Kingdom Collaboration** – 21st century churches are open to partnerships and alliances that cross denominational lines for purposes of mission, both locally and globally. There is an openness and willingness on the part of leaders to interact with and learn from other leaders outside their tradition and regional boundaries.
EXECUTIVE PASTOR MODEL

The “Executive Pastor” position is a form of “Church Mtg & Ministry Admin.” The gift package and temperament of the Senior Pastor generally dictates the style or form of Ministry Administration. Some Senior Pastors like to administrate the entire ministry, others do not. Generally a lack of time and giftedness result in choosing the “Executive Pastor model” of church management and ministry administration.

The Executive Pastor works very closely with the Senior Pastor, and generally is responsible for giving oversight to the ministry and supervising staff. In addition, they oftentimes have their own program responsibilities. As such, the Executive Pastor focuses his attention on:

1. Planning – establishing goals and strategies
2. Staffing – development, direction and supervision
3. Prioritizing – establishes ministry objectives
4. Evaluating – gauges ministry effectiveness

The Executive Pastor develops staff and encourages them to “go for it.” The focus of the Executive Pastor is not a matter of “control,” like that of a good Business Manager. Executive Pastors focus more on the “big picture and light control,” whereas Business Managers focus more on “detail and tight control.”

Good Executive Pastors generally have 20-25 years of Pastor experience; thus they can handle all of the ministries responsibilities within a church. Executive Pastors “shepherd the systems” of the church, not necessarily the people. They “split the Senior Pastor role” – freeing the Senior Pastor from some of his responsibilities, letting him focus on those ministries in which he is most efficient and effective. Thus the two positions are generally characterized as that of “Preaching Pastor” and “Executive Pastor.” In a word, the Executive Pastor “serves” the Senior Pastor, supervises staff, and gives oversight to ministry administration. The Executive Pastor also “reports to the Senior Pastor;” though he may work with the “board” in various capacities as well. Staff Meetings are also generally overseen by the Executive Pastor – he sets the agenda. Hiring and firing are joint responsibilities of the Preaching Pastor and the Executive Pastor; though some Senior Pastors give this responsibility to the Executive Pastor.

Qualities to look for in an “Executive Pastor” –

1. Loyalty to Senior Pastor – supportive, effective “team” is always built on “trust”
2. Shared Philosophy – same direction, compatibility
3. Competence – giftedness, track record
4. Ministry Administration – staff and programs
5. Enabling – develop and encourage staff, provide resources
6. Leadership – servant’s heart, staff morale
7. Entrepreneur – enterprising, initiating, assertive, risk-taking
8. Calling – “for such a time as this”
9. Integrity – true to himself, others, and to God
10. Teachable – open to the ideas of others
11. Self-Confident – secure in his own identity; strong ego

The number one reason this Management Style malfunctions is “responsibility without authority.” This goes with any position – one can never be responsible if he or she has not been given corresponding authority. Effective leadership “delegates the necessary authority” to match the responsibility.