

Christian Leader or Manager?

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Recently Carolyn and I attended a conference on strategic spiritual warfare. In this conference we heard of churches in Argentina with over a hundred thousand members. In addition, we know of the great hunger and move of God in the Eastern European countries of the former Soviet Union. We hear of powerful moves of the Spirit in other nations as well such as the Philippines and Korea.

God is moving in the world today in unprecedented ways. I believe we well may be at the beginning of the last, great outpouring of His Spirit in the world in preparation for the great in-gathering of souls prior to Jesus' return. If this is so, it is going to take a special kind of pastor in the coming days to guide his or her church into the mainstream of God's mighty move.

Two Kinds of Pastors

As Carolyn and I travel, we have the privilege of hearing many church leaders from all over the world. We have come to the conclusion that there are two distinct kinds of pastors heading local churches today. There are leaders. . . and there are managers.

Note here that I am not speaking of those with the gift of administration who are part of the management team of a church or parachurch organization. Of course, this is a wonderful gift and every Christian group should utilize those with this gift of administration to help manage that group. But, let me be honest. This type of manager rarely makes a great pastor. Let's examine why.

1. The Manager/Pastor

Managers are pastors who are expert in "keeping the ship afloat" and making sure everything on board is "ship shape." Thus, they are very good at running things as they now exist. All the existing programs function well. Everything is in its place. Nothing is out of order.

But the manager has little vision. He is incapable of inciting people to common action or goals. He resists significant changes, the *status quo* is his goal. His daily motto is, "Everything is just fine. Just trim the sail and maintain the present course."

2. The Leader/Pastor

On the other hand, the leader pastor is bold, creative and motivational. He or she strives for great vision both for his or her church and community. She leads by example. He, like Paul, exerts the energy to say, ". . . I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." (Phi 3:12 NIV)

The leader's zeal is contagious. He draws people who are eager to accept his challenge to do exploits for God. He places people in the right places, using their knowledge, skills and expertise. All are given both a challenge and the opportunity to serve.

One of the most challenging leaders in the Bible was Joshua. He inherited the leadership of Israel suddenly and bore

the responsibility of taking them into their inheritance in the promised land. Here is part of God's charge to Joshua as leader of Israel:

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them--to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates--all the Hittite country--to the Great Sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." (Jos 1:1-9 NIV)

Characteristics of a Pastor/Leader Versus the Pastor/Manager

1. The Leader is Strong and Courageous

Recently, I heard an American pastor pour his heart out in a meeting. He described his general feeling of frustration with his church as it was. His church had all of the usual programs--Sunday school, prayer night, children and young people's meetings and so forth. Yes, his church was strong and healthy, but he wasn't satisfied. He wanted more. He wanted to hear from God.

He took to heart God's call to Joshua and he took a courageous step. He cancelled all church programs except prayer meetings and worship services and called his people to continual prayer. He led his people, through prayer, into God's throne room seeking His will for the church. It worked! God revealed a new plan and direction for the church. Today his church is strong and vibrant in Christ. He is courageously leading his church.

2. The Manager is Slow and Cautious

On the other hand, the manager will find little wrong with his church, thinking everything is going well. He sees little need to change. He is quite happy with the way things are. He thinks that if his church is not pleasing to God, then God is free to move sovereignly to change it. The pastor does not need to take any further action.

3. The Leader Has Vision

The leader sees what God is doing and moves with Him. Remember all the instructions God gave Joshua? Once God had spoken to Joshua, he immediately began putting those instructions into action. The leader knows the will of God and tries to implement it. He hasn't time for those who stand by and continually ask, "What if. . . ?" His mind is quite clear about what to do and how to do it.

Carolyn and I witnessed a leader in the Philippines start a new church one Sunday morning. The leader-pastor stood and announced, "Starting the first Sunday of next month Pastor Rick is starting a new church across the city. I want 500 volunteers who will go with him." He told them that he wanted them to commit their membership, including their tithes and offerings, to the new church plant for 3 months. At the end of that time they were free to come back to the large church if they wished to do so. He then had people stand to their feet while the ushers counted them. There is not a doubt in my mind that they had 500 volunteers at the end of that month.

That's creative. That's innovative. That's vision in action! Why struggle for months or years when you can start an instant church? Because his vision moved him to action, he cared little that in a month his church would be smaller by five hundred people. God blesses this kind of bold obedience by a pastor.

4. The Manager Only Sees Problems

The manager never moves with the drastic, bold action as we just saw above. No, he sees such moves as laden with problems. What about the loss of tithes? What about the splitting of families? Can the new pastor properly handle that many people? Besides, it's good training for him to build his own church from the beginning. . . the way I did.

This reminds me of the twelve spies Moses sent into the promised land. The ten saw the same things as did Joshua and Caleb. However, Joshua and Caleb also saw the great benefits while the others saw only a multitude of obstacles. Two were leaders, ten were managers.

5. The Leader Imparts His Vision

Let's go back to Joshua. God gave him a vision along with specific instructions, didn't He? He gave Joshua the vision of leading the Israelites into the land God had promised to their forefathers. The same thing still happens today. God doesn't hide His will and plans from His leaders. One sure way to catch God's vision for a church is for the pastor and his or her leadership to pray into the heart of God seeking that vision. I believe God has great plans for every one of His churches, no matter how small the beginning. He has called his children to go into all the world and make disciples and the primary vehicle He has established to accomplish this commission is the local church. Of course He wants to impart that vision to every pastor and every supporting church leadership body!

Once the leader/pastor gets even part of that vision, he is bold in imparting it to his church. The vision of a leader is contagious. It spreads rapidly among his followers. He easily imparts it to others. All who are around the leader catch the

same vision. As they grasp the vision, a desire burns within each of them to see it unfold. In this manner the leader enlists coworkers who are ready to help him bring the vision to pass.

How does a leader spread his vision? By talking about it, by teaching his people about it and by putting into place plans that will begin to see it happen.

6. The Manager Lacks Vision

It is impossible to impart that which one does not have. If the manager lacks vision, he can only look back or focus on the present *status quo*. "Yes, I recall when God filled this altar with people crying out to Him night after night. . . " says the manager vainly trying to invoke a spark of response from his people.

7. The Leader Empowers Others

Leaders are quick to recognize that they can't accomplish the job alone. They quickly identify those with talent and delegate to them the authority necessary to do what their talent enables them to do.

How quickly Moses heeded his father-in-law's advice to delegate authority to able men to settle matters of dispute among people. (See Exodus 18.) While the leader knows how to delegate both authority and responsibility, he always carries the ultimate responsibility. The leader must always bear the burden of responsibility. The leader never says, "It's his fault!" for he knows that ultimate responsibility is his and his alone. Yes, the leader knows that others will credit him for any success, and he also knows that the blame for any failure must properly rest on him.

8. The Manager Maintains Control

Managers are reluctant to delegate their authority. They readily give subordinates title and position. But they do not delegate authority. Subordinates must bring every detail to the manager for final decision. The manager maintains control. He must continually prove to all that it is he who is in charge. Unfortunately, often this manager/pastor will not accept the blame if something goes wrong. It is usually someone else's fault.

9. The Leader Is Not Afraid of Failure

God knows that there will be times of doubt and fear. Several times He told Joshua, "Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged!" The leader is willing to accept these doubts and fears and will move on despite them.

Even with the clear mandate Joshua had from the Lord, he still made mistakes. In Joshua, 9, we see the story of the Gibeonites deception. They came deceitfully claiming to be from a distant kingdom seeking terms of peace when in reality they were from the next city on Joshua's warfare list. The Bible says, "The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord." (Jos 9:14 NIV) Based on what he saw, Joshua made peace with them. That was a mistake, but it did not deter Joshua from his vision of conquering the land. Yes, leaders do make mistakes, but they are not fearful. They continue to move according to the vision God has given them.

10. The Manager Is Fearful of Mistakes

In contrast managers fear any kind of failure or mistake. Such would be a sign of his or her weakness. He exerts great effort to avoid mistakes or failure of any kind for fear that it makes him look bad. Of course, this is also pride.

When God told Joshua to lead Israel across the Jordan, the river was at flood stage. (Jos 3:15) The manager would have cautiously said, "Let's wait till the flood waters recede. Then we will cross." The very idea of crossing at flood stage would terrify him.

11. The Leader Is a God Pleaser

The leader's burning desire is to please the Lord. With the Apostle Paul he says, "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Phi 3:13-14 NIV) Jesus set the example of a leader when he said, "I have come to do your will, O God." (Heb 10:7 NIV)

The leader has little concern about pleasing others. He follows Paul when he said, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not my own self." (1 Cor 4:3 KJV)

12. The Manager Is A Man Pleaser

The manager is constantly striving to please others. "What will the regional office think?" or, "How can we justify this?" he asks. Or he is continually worrying about offending someone, forgetting that Jesus, the greatest leader of all time, often offended people. The manager's drive to please others blinds him to the fact that if he is to please God, he cannot please man.

13. The Leader Inspires and Encourages

The leader inspires others with words of encouragement. He complements his team members when they do well. When he sees unsatisfactory work, he remembers to comment on its positive aspects while dealing with what went wrong and why.

14. The Manager Is Always Cautious

When someone exhibits initiative and does something outside the manager's plan, he becomes wary. He generally sends signals of, "I'd be very careful if I were you. You don't want to get outside of God's will, or get ahead of Him. Let's just wait on that."

How Can We Get God's Vision?

God is moving mightily in the earth today. He is extending a call to His managers to join with His leaders. But, if we find ourselves more in the manager group than in the leader group, how can we transition from manager to leader?

The answer is simple. Press into His presence and see what He is doing. That is vision. Although this answer is simple, it isn't easy. It requires total commitment to pressing in. It requires drastic action. It requires a major change in one's current attitudes. It requires making all other priorities "number two"

and pressing into God's presence "number one." Most of all, I think it means no longer being concerned with what others think. A real pastor/leader plays to an audience of one, the Lord!

Pastoring Through a Move of God

Probably the biggest challenge any pastor faces in his or her ministry is to pastor a congregation into and through a move of God. Many pastors are afraid of it. What if there's flesh? What if there are demonic manifestations? What if people don't like it and leave the church? These are all good, valid questions. But the bottom line for every pastor is, "Are you going to follow God wherever He takes you and your people, or not?"

Let me say right now that I have never pastored a church during a time of a new move of God such as He is doing in the world today. I have been in lots of revival meetings and love them. I have read extensively about past revivals. I read everything I can get my hands on about what God is doing today, and I have listened to those in leadership describe their roles in the revivals in which they find themselves. I admire those in leadership who willingly step into the river of God and do their best to flow with it. I pray for revival daily and for those in leadership in the revivals.

Let me give you just a few quotes that I have collected from some of the pastors and leaders.

"It was as though I was paralyzed. And we had one service that day, it literally never ended. It started at 8:30 in the morning and ended the next morning at 2:00 a.m."

"All across the building people were falling under the presence of God. That's not something that happened much in our church, but people were stretched out everywhere."

"There's no structure to the service."

"So, I mean, when He begins to move there's not one thing you can do."

"We've got people storming in here that we've never heard of, never seen, never talked to. And God's doing it in a way that is so far superior to what we could do that we've just cancelled everything."

One pastor, when people started the holy laughter, didn't particularly like it and God just said to him, "This is My Church. It's not yours."

"It seems that everything is increasing in intensity: the levels of praise, worship, and warfare, sometimes breaking out spontaneously and continuing for long periods of time; the numbers of souls responding to the altar calls, the depth of conviction."

One pastor, when talking about his critics, said, "The critics continue to raise their voices and attack those things of which they are ignorant. But what would revival be like without the critics? (That's similar to asking what the Gospels would be like without the Pharisees.) When God starts moving, everyone falls into place: The hungry press forward and are filled, the lost are drawn in and the backsliders drawn home, the laborers are raised up and thrust out, and the critics criticize! What else could we expect? Birds fly, fish swim, liars lie, and critics criticize."

Observations Concerning a Move of God

I want to make a few observations about what happens in revival.

1. The Flesh, the Demonic, and the Lord Will Be There

To those of you who may be reluctant to really allow God to move in your congregation for fear that there may be some who react in their own flesh, relax, it will happen. But, with God's guidance, you can handle that! Worried about some demonic spirit showing up? Relax, it will happen. But God will see that you can handle that too! And the Holy Spirit will be there guiding you and your leadership. God will not abandon you to forces you can't handle.

Oh, there will be problems in revival. There always are. But there are problems in the church anyway, right? And wouldn't you much rather have revival problems than the routine problems like gossip, backbiting, complaints about every little thing, and on and on?

2. You Will Lose Control

If you truly move aside and allow the Holy Spirit to orchestrate your services, of course you will lose control. Or rather you are simply giving up control. But to whom? To the Holy Spirit, that's whom! We all hear that some people don't like what goes on in revival meetings because its not done, "decently and in order," to quote 1 Corinthians, 14:40 (KJV). But if the Holy Spirit is doing it, it is decent and it is most certainly in order, although it is God's order, not man's order.

3. Some People Will Criticize

Yes, you will have your critics, maybe even in your own leadership team. But you do anyway, right? Be prepared for people to leave. But also be prepared for a lot more people to come. I said earlier in this article that a real leader is a God pleaser, not a man pleaser. You play to an audience of one, God. Let Him handle the critics. You just continue to follow the Lord with as much humility and grace as you can.

4. There Will Be Change

One absolutely universal characteristic of a move of God is that things change. Your services will probably get longer. You will probably cancel some of your programs. You will probably add services. Things will change, but that's up to God, isn't it? Remember, God promised He will shake everything that can be shaken, starting, I believe, with His church.

So pray for revival in your midst. And when it comes, rejoice, celebrate, and shepherd your people as best you can. God will take care of the rest!

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