

Institute for Christian Learning  
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**CHRISTIAN ADMINISTRATION:  
RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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## INTRODUCTION

A boys' dean at an Adventist Academy approached his principal after a session of the Discipline Committee and inquired of him as to when he was going to get in touch with the parents of the boys who had just been disciplined. The principal answered, "That is none of your business. I'll do it when I get ready." The dean was taken aback by that answer. He had been the boys' dean at this particular academy for almost nine years and in that period of time had developed a rapport with most of the parents in the conference and anticipated that there would be those parents who would want to speak with him about the situation. In order to know when he could begin to expect these phone calls he asked the principal when he was going to get in touch with the parents concerning the discipline. Having received such an answer from the principal the boys' dean went home to try to figure out what his relationship to the new principal was going to be and how he would be able to function in his responsibility as boys' dean at this particular school. Before the school year ended that boys' dean handed in his resignation and went to work outside of education. A fine dean of boys was lost to the denomination because of the situation mentioned previously and other such situations during the course of the remainder of the school year.

A pastor was called to serve a church within a particular conference. He had served as a pastor within a neighboring conference and had come with adequate recommendations. He served the new congregation for several years and was well-accepted by his congregation. Previous to becoming a Seventh-day Adventist the pastor had been a mortician. Because he was the father of six children and was having a difficult time raising his family on a denominational salary, he arranged with the local mortuary to be on call for duty one day a week and informed the conference officers of this arrangement. After serving that church for several years he was suddenly released from his responsibility as pastor by the executive committee of the conference on the recommendation of the conference president and against the wishes of the local church. Several years later this man had not found work as a pastor and was forced to seek employment outside the church and his chosen area of service.

A new president came to a conference and within the next twelve months or so all the departmental men had received and accepted calls to positions in other conferences. Later it became known that the conference president engineered most if not all the calls and encouraged the men to accept these calls so he could build his own organization. Those for whom he could not engineer calls, he asked for their resignations on the pretext that people in the field were dissatisfied with their performance. All this was done at tremendous expense to the local conference as new people were called and moving expenses were tabulated.

These three cases are examples of leadership styles which have negative consequences for the organization which they are attempting to lead and for the those who are being led. Such conduct on the part of some administrators in our organization not only cost the organization money in searching out and recruiting new personnel, but also produce destructive thinking and actions on the part of those who have been dealt with in this fashion. Can we, in our Seventh-day Adventist church related organizations, afford the "fallout" that such leadership produces?

## WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

When one is called to any administrative duty within the Seventh-day Adventist Church structure what does that mean? Does it mean that one now deserves a greater amount of respect than formerly? Does it mean that one has climbed up higher on the ladder of success and therefore is entitled to more power? Does it mean that such a one is better than others who have not attained to that position? How does one relate to others in such an organization? What should the attitude be towards the co-workers? How does such a person now handle leadership of former colleagues, if former colleagues are involved?

In any organization there are those who have climbed up through the ranks to positions of leadership within that organization due to their own preparation, persistence, and anticipation for such leadership positions. At times there has been a calling of certain ones to positions of leadership because they have shown some great natural leadership abilities and had earned the respect of their peers. At other times there has been a calling to leadership persons who have little or no leadership skills nor have they had any training for such positions. They were called to these positions because of a need which existed and could not be met with anyone qualified with leadership skills or proven abilities at that time. How does each of the above persons handle leadership?

People with natural leadership skills and decision-making abilities usually make good decisions because they base their decisions on what is good for the organization. In any organization this would be considered good leadership. "Home grown leaders," that is, leaders who have risen up through the organization, are usually more successful in their jobs because they know the problems of the organization which they are attempting to lead and do not have to spend time learning that portion of the leadership role. It is not possible to make good leadership decisions without knowing the many internal problems of the organization which one intends to lead. For that reason people who are promoted from within the organization have a head start on anyone who might be brought in from without. The down side of this arrangement is that, in some cases, those promoted from within are fought by their former peers, who may make it difficult for the new leader to proceed with his job.

## ORIENTATION OF LEADERSHIP

In some respect leadership is politically oriented but in other respects leadership is socially oriented. The politically orientated leader will decide what is best for the organization and his own future as a leader in that organization. The socially orientated leader will decide what is best for the organization and the needs of the people involved in that organization, and will attempt to lead those people in fulfilling the goals of the organization in such a manner that those involved in the work are challenged to produce in an environment which promotes good feeling and self fulfillment.

Whenever one deals with people one must always consider the social aspects of leadership. One can make the correct decisions for the organization but those same decisions may be detrimental to the workers of that organization. When such happens and the workers begin to be affected in any way then it will not be long before that organization begins to be affected also. This paper is an attempt to point out the social aspects of leadership and the responsibilities of those who are in leadership positions within the structure of our church and educational organizations.

## ESSENTIALS OF GOOD LEADERSHIP

"People usually get to be leaders because they were good 'doers'".<sup>1</sup> That is to say that they were good in their respective fields. In the field of education we would say that they were good teachers. Usually good "doers" get promoted to leadership positions. However, we must understand that a good "doer" will not necessarily become a good leader. Working with people in a role of leadership is a whole new "ballgame", as we say in the American idiom.

Electing a person to a leadership position does not necessarily give that person leadership qualities. In our educational system we quite often place people into positions of leadership who have not had previous experience or training for leadership positions. In this we may be setting up good people for failure. It is important that we recognize that leadership and ability in a certain area of performance are not necessarily related. "Leadership is a function rather than a position."<sup>2</sup> When you have been elected to a position of leadership you must now function as a leader. You no longer act as one who looks to others to tell you what to do. You now must be able to get your ideas across to those with whom you work and prove to them that you know what you are doing and are able to provide leadership for them. This may be more difficult than one first supposes. You must now act toward the mission of your position and get things accomplished. In a position of leadership you are responsible for a whole lot more than you were in your previous position and you must see that all the work is accomplished in a proper and acceptable manner and that the direction of your leadership is consistent with the goals of your department and the organization.

In becoming a successful leader you must now act in such a way that you cause those whom you lead to want you as their leader. If you act in a belligerent or dictatorial manner no one will want to work under you or want you to be their leader. You may be doing everything for a cause and from an unselfish motive but if your actions are such as mentioned above your leadership will not be wanted by those who are to work under you. You must always keep in mind that as a leader you are also a servant-- a servant to the cause for which you are leading and in that manner a servant to those whom you are endeavoring to lead.

A successful leader always projects a positive attitude towards his work, the organization for whom he works, and the workers under his leadership. Few, if any, would choose to work with or for a leader who consistently projects a negative attitude. Therefore, a good leader must always consider the image he is projecting. Mans and Sims say that if a leader's expectations of his fellow-workers are contradictory to the way in which he acts or behaves his leadership will have a negative effect.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years much has been written about excellence in leadership. What the word, excellence, may mean to one person may not have the same meaning for another because the quality of excellence is subject to personal interpretation. However in discussing excellence we must understand that "excellence applies not to how we feel about ourselves, nor how individualistic we become, but to the quality of my life, to its virtues... In humans excellence is found by a moral and intellectual development that guides my decisions and actions."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, if a leader expects excellence from those whom he is intending to lead he must first show them that his own life projects those qualities.

No one can feel comfortable working for a leader who continually runs down his staff members. Sooner or later such a leader will run down all members of his staff and destroy his leadership role in the organization. This type of leader cannot survive long in any organization because his actions are destructive to himself, to those he is attempting to lead, and to the organization which he represents. This type of leader tries to lead by dominance. For one to be dominant another must be subject to him. Dominance of a leader over those he is attempting to lead is not the answer. "Dominance is a destructive leadership characteristic that results when management makes itself appear superior by making others inferior."<sup>5</sup> For Christians a dominance-based leadership style is unacceptable. Our example must be Jesus Christ, who came to earth, in the form of man, to serve and to lead mankind. At no time did He use His personal power to dominate those with whom He associated. Instead, by the simple act of foot-washing, He showed His disciples the true meaning of servant-leadership. In the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist church we must have leadership in order for our organization to function and progress. But we should always remember that a leadership position in our church organizational structure is never for the purpose of dominating either the organization or those who work in that organization.

One definition of good leadership may be based upon the Golden Rule. This, very simply interpreted, means to make it very pleasant for people to do what you want them to do or move in the direction you want them to go. There may be times when it will be necessary for an administrator to be unpleasant but these times will be forced upon an administrator by a staff member's attitude, behavior, or lack of adequate performance. All administration is not togetherness and good feeling. "There are times when one must face the unwilling person who is under one's leadership. However, the unpleasantness should come only after the administrator has done everything possible to try to change the staff member's attitude by other, and positive means."<sup>6</sup>

In dealing with a recalcitrant employee one must never forget that the action one takes, or does not take, when action ought to be taken, will affect one's relationships with all other staff members. DeBruyn says, "any action not taken, for whatever reason, when cause necessitates it will only weaken the leadership efforts of the administrator."<sup>7</sup> When some action is necessary, a true leader does not hesitate to take action. In doing so such a leader indicates to all concerned that he is a caring person and an effective leader. First, in caring for the welfare of the organization, and, in turn, concern for the individual involved and for all those who work closely with the leader.

"Some leaders choose to abuse power and have adopted a leadership style based upon domination, fear, and mistreatment. They believe that good leaders must carry a big stick and use it to threaten those being led. It is inconceivable how such leaders can find any kind of happiness or satisfaction in their work. Leaders of this type seldom survive the long term. Eventually word, concerning their leadership style, gets around and no one wants to work for them. The only way a person, as just described, can stay in a leadership position is by constantly changing jobs and going from one place to another where he is not yet known."<sup>8</sup>

Manz and Sims say that, "As leaders we seem to learn in two ways. First, by analyzing our shortcomings and making corrections and, second by observing those who do things best and imitating them."<sup>9</sup> In our responsibility to those whom we lead, it would seem that the most important technique of all is the modeling of appropriate leadership behavior. We learn leadership skills when experienced executives exhibit this behavior to us. Harmon says that "For expanding or building up a strength absolutely nothing beats teaching it to others."<sup>10</sup>

One of the most important ingredients of good leadership is communication. Leaders must make certain that they know what they are doing, where they are going, how they plan to get there, and communicate this to their staffs. The staff may not always agree with where the leader may want to go or how he wants to get there. This is where the leader's ability to communicate with the staff will be invaluable. The leader must convince the staff of the direction and the worthiness of the goal for the organization or change direction. The staff must be sold on the idea or they may give little support to the leader. It is the leader's responsibility to make certain that everyone on the staff understands what and where the goals are, and why they have been set there if they are expected to support these goals. That is where good communication is very important. Without good, clear information those involved cannot function properly nor carry out the mission of the organization.

#### MEETING HUMAN NEEDS IN LEADERSHIP

According to DeBruyn, "Psychologists have classified human behavior into two distinct categories. They are the physiological and the psychological. The physiological are the instinctive or unlearned behaviors, such as; 1) hunger, 2) thirst, 3) sex, 4) air, 5) rest, 6) escape pain, 7) eliminate waste. These are often called the Primary Motives.

The psychological needs are as follows: 1) gregariousness, 2) aggression, 3) affiliations, 4) inquisitiveness, 5) achievement, 6) power, 7) status, 8) autonomy. These are often called the Secondary Motives."<sup>11</sup>

DeBruyn says that the primary needs of any person working under you must be fulfilled before the psychological motives can be considered by that individual. People must be housed, clothed and fed, etc., before they can be expected to turn their full attention to productive work. One must be certain that a subordinate's primary needs are being met if that person is not performing to expected levels and before any acceptable negative action is taken towards such a person. It is not enough to fire a person who is not performing and begin again with someone new. Each

person must be helped by your understanding of their situation and in your trying to help turn the situation around. This is the responsibility of leadership. If you can do this for your staff members you will have loyal supporters. This is the mark of an excellent leader.

It is within the secondary motives that people reach their goals and their self-concepts. People with a high intensity of secondary needs are very likely to be highly motivated people. People with a low intensity of secondary needs are very easily led. Sometimes an administrator surrounds himself with people with low intensity needs because they are no threat to his leadership. The mistake in this is that these very people will contribute to that leader's downfall because they are not themselves highly motivated and not great producers.

As we look at the secondary motives we begin to pick out a pattern of behavior which ought to help us in our own style of leadership.

- 1) Gregariousness. People have a need to associate with a group. Very few people are loners. Most have a desire to belong to a group.
- 2) Aggression. People have a need to assert themselves. One must recognize this need or face the fact that his leadership will be fought.
- 3) Affiliations. People need to be close to each other or close to the boss. Socials and inter-system activities fulfill this type of need.
- 4) Inquisitiveness. People need to know what is going on. Keep your communications open. The more the better. Tell them why certain things are so. Don't keep secrets to yourself.
- 5) Achievement. All people need to succeed and to be recognized for their success. Success without recognition weakens the motivation. No accomplishments should go unnoticed. Why should a person continually do his best if he is not given any credit for it?
- 6) Power. What a leader needs to understand is that people count. They are important. People hold the key to a leader's power.
- 7) Status. Everybody wants to be somebody. A leader should never do anything to detract from the identity of the individual. Give praise and recognition as it is due.
- 8) Autonomy. Everyone wants to be his own boss. When you assign a person a task give him the latitude to accomplish that task without continuously checking up on him and giving advice. If you criticize the work or the person doing the work, either publicly or privately, you lose the respect of the worker and his support of your leadership.

These primary and secondary needs must be fulfilled if someone whom you supervise is going to produce good work for you. When you know these needs they provide you with an invaluable source of leadership insights. These needs are why people act the way they do. These motives cannot be ignored if the administrator is to be successful. Without giving consideration to these needs one may find that in order to lead one must resort to giving commands, orders, and directives. This may work for a time as people may continue to be led out of fear of losing a job, but that is never quality leadership and the thoughtful leader must abandon this style of leadership or suffer defeat in the long run.

When an administrator deals with a worker who is not producing quality work it is his responsibility to ascertain why this is so and to proceed to help that individual to overcome the difficulties which prevent him from being successful. Most people involved in a profession such as teaching or pastoring, have put a lot of work and study into their preparation for their intended work and we must assume that they want to be successful in their professions. Some have more natural ability and instinctively do better in their work than do others, but all are to be given a certain mark of respect and all are to be encouraged to grow in their abilities and expand their service.

When dealing with subordinates in any organization we, as leaders, must always remember that we are dealing with other humans who have needs, wants and feelings such as we ourselves have. A leader cannot trample upon the feelings of subordinates and get away with it for long. This type of leader will always suffer some defeat if such leadership tactics are employed. Not only will the leader suffer but the organization which that leader is attempting to lead will suffer also. If the organization does not belong to a leader who is behaving in this manner, he will not last as a leader in that organization if he does not learn to deal with people in a caring and respectful manner. That does not mean that one must continually put up with incompetence or inability of those under a leaders care to produce good work, but that people with such characteristics be dealt with in a manner which will cause each one to want to be a successful and productive worker. Termination, or reassignment within the organization should come only after all methods of helping the individual involved have been exhausted.

### **SOME RULES FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

Sometimes it is good to write down some rules for people to follow. The following rules are taken from DeBruyn and reflect fairly what a good leader ought to be doing to cause those in an organization to appreciate his actions in leadership.

1. Always be honest with those whom you are leading.
2. Always tell the whole truth. This promotes trust.
3. Be careful about standardizing procedures. Even though this may facilitate work getting done, standardized procedures get in the way of good leadership. A staff needs to make input into decisions which are going to affect them in any way.



Freedom on the part of the people you lead to accomplish any given task will promote good feelings on the part of those being led.

4. Plan carefully for accomplishment of goals. This includes who should be involved in the task and when it should be completed.
5. An effective leader must adjust his own behavior if he expects to get others to change their behaviors.
6. People are more important than things.
7. Positive reinforcement from a leader is necessary if a group is going to continue to work together productively. When positive reinforcements are absent negative human attitudes are likely to emerge from members of the group.
8. A leader must show appreciation to his group if he is to secure the loyalty of that group.
9. Pride, as a principle, must be established by the leader in order for the group to work together for the accomplishment of common goals.
10. Trust is a necessary ingredient in the leader-follower relationship which emerges from positive administrative input.
11. Delegation of responsibility. If a person or group has been delegated a certain responsibility without interference the project is apt to be more successful.
12. Establish good relations with those you lead if you wish to obtain full information from them otherwise they will filter the information which they give you which may cause you to make unwise decisions.
13. Remember that what people think is the real issue. It is not a matter of right and wrong. Perception is truth to all of us. If your people think you are unfair you might as well be. Whether you are or not is insignificant.
14. Management communication is very important and must be arranged so that it will have a personal impact on each or they may pay no attention to it.
15. Decisions must be made as quickly as possible or the passage of time can magnify the problem.<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The leadership style of Adventist Christians in leadership roles must be based on the example of Jesus Christ. He came in the form of man to serve and to lead mankind. Seventh-day Adventist leadership style must be one of flexibility and yet one of giving direction while paying close attention to the maturity and ability of the one who is being led. It is the responsibility of leadership to promote the growth of leadership ability in those over whom they have authority. A true leader will understand that we all must function within the abilities with which God has endowed each of us. When something goes wrong, if that should happen, it must be remembered that each of us makes mistakes and that these mistakes may be because of inaccurate information which we had and acted upon at the time that a decision was being made. A leader must always take into account the information upon which the subordinate acted. It may be that given the same information the leader may have made the same decision under those circumstances.

It is important that a leader do all he can to help those who work with him to become successful. In making other people successful he is producing other successful leaders and enhancing his own success. It has been shown that some very capable persons will work for less pay in certain situations where they are treated with respect. Respect, even for those who are a negative contribution to the organization, is an absolutely essential element of good leadership. People who continually complain or gripe must be shown how to work better and must be made to understand that each person in the organization is important if the work of that organization is to progress in an acceptable and orderly fashion. If this attitude does not produce cooperation and genuine trust then other means must be used to ensure that the organization is not negatively affected, however, such workers are to be given every measure of respect as they are shown how they can be better workers. It is only when a worker refuses to change his attitude or cannot satisfy the demands of the organization that termination of that individual should be considered as an option.

In dealing with our fellow man we must keep in mind that each person has specific needs and wants. Those must be fulfilled if people are to be effective workers. Negative leaders tend to destroy within sensitive people that spark of ingenuity and self direction. We, as Christians, will be held accountable for how we have acted and how we have made others feel who have been under our leadership.

Manske says that "the ultimate leader is one who is willing to develop people to the point that they eventually surpass him or her in knowledge"<sup>13</sup> The ultimate challenge of leadership for Adventist Christian administrators in our schools, colleges, and church structure is to approach leadership responsibility with the view that we are all children of God with special gifts and talents, sensitive feelings, and a desire to serve our Lord. That flame of service may very easily be extinguished in some of our workers by uncaring and unempathetic leadership thus rendering them incapable or unwilling to carry on in service of our church institutions.

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