

1 Cor 14:17+20 GOOD CHRISTIANS, POOR LEADERS

PRELIMS. I was fascinated this week in reading about some of the reasons why most churches **fail!** One article said it was entirely because of **Poor Leaders!** It was a very convincing article!! Here we have Paul **complaining** about the **leadership** in the church at Corinth “*giving thanks **well enough**, but the **other person is not being built up**” - something which the church was designed to do! The church is to grow and become the **greatest** of **all** institutions! So, without entering into the subject of what constitutes **failure** in the church, lets look at this matter of leadership in the church!*

We have to be very **careful!** Poor leaders do **not mean** that such leaders are poor **Xns!** They might be very good and strong Xns but they are not leaders! Leadership has **special qualities!**

Doctrinal soundness does not mean we will necessary prosper or our church will grow! Even being very faithful in guarding our doctrine and **guarding** our **practice**, does not guarantee spiritual prosperity! There might **not** even be anything **wrong** with the **character** of the leaders or the **spirituality** of the leaders, or the **discernment** of the leaders yet that church could be dying because there is no leadership!

Too often churches are led by those who do not have the **gift of leadership!** Churches are tempted to elect leaders who **only** have **grace**, but may not have a clue about leading people!

What is **vital** is that leaders have **leadership** qualities - ie, being able to **lead** people in the right direction. **Every** Xn has a certain amount of **grace**, and some **spiritual qualities** - else of course they would **not** be **Xns!** But **not** every Xn has leadership qualities or **all** the gifts! People can be **in office**, yet not have the gift of leadership! You can be very well-meaning and sincere, but lack the gift of leadership!

That is what the Apostle Paul was concerned about in Corinth - lack of good leadership? They had gifts but not leadership ones! That is why he asked “*Are all apostles?*” Are all leaders? No, obviously not! So, he told them to “*earnestly desire the **higher gifts**” [1Cor 12:29]*

Keeping the status quo is never an option for the church! Why? Because the **world is always changing**, and therefore new strategies will be required to address the changing situations. Just as God commanded Moses to change some customs regarding the tabernacle after they settled in the land, so today there are **administrative** changes that need to be made in order to **communicate** the gospel to **people!** The tabernacle was **transportable** - because they were a travelling people, but once they became settled in Canaan things were going to be different - thus the many **new regulations** God announced in [Deu] regarding worship and the service we owe Him!

The **manna** and the **miracles** were to **stop** and now they had to plant and grow their crops and wait for seasons to ripen fruit etc! What **social change!** “*You shall **not do** according to all that we are doing here today*” (in the desert). But now “*you **may slaughter and eat meat within any of your towns***” (instead of **only** at the **door** of the **tabernacle**)! Also “*the **unclean***” (person) “*and the **clean***” (person) “*may eat*” (unclean Israelites were not allowed to eat some things before)! The thing that did **not** change was the **blood!** “*only you shall **not eat the blood***”[Deu12:8,15,16] Blood was precious to God!

It was **easy** for every Israelite to go to the tabernacle to offer his sacrifices/tithes when they were a **nomadic** tribe **carrying** their ‘temple’ with them, but once in the land, things were to **change** “*If the place where the Lord your God will choose to put His name there is too far for you...then you may kill any of your herd...and you may eat within your towns*”[Deu 12:21cf] Before - only eat at tabernacle!

So, when **social** conditions changed, **God** altered some of the **administrative** regulations, but **not** the **essence** of the gospel - represented here by the **blood!** So the status quo **may alter!**

To return to leaders! Godly **elders**, may nevertheless be **poor** leaders. Elders may be **naive**, **out of touch**, have **tunnel vision**, they may be **insecure**, **theologically mistaken**, they may be **lazy**, and **non-committed**, and even **negligent!** Yet these same people in other areas of their lives may be fully committed eg, work or in the community! Well, such people **ought not** to be **leaders** in God’s church!

The **naive** leader may think a Xn who is ‘nice, kind’ would make a good leader! Not so! The **out of touch** leader may **not** realise the **pressure** some people may be under. They may not realise the pressure some **students** are under in their **studies** and **financial** restraints, and **peer** pressure to conform to the world! Some **wives** have **awful** husbands and are **lonely** looking after the children, all day, every day! Some husbands have very **demanding wives**! A **good** leader will **discern** the various restraints his flock are under! Good leaders **must be in touch** with their culture!

The **insecure** leader will resist **change** of any kind in **fear** of what it may **lead** to! ‘Its the beginning of the slippery slope’ they will say to any change which breaks with tradition! Fear of what **may** happen must **never** be a reason for not doing something - there must be more solid reasons. Every doctrine can be **abused**, every doctrine has an **extreme**! There is danger in every doctrine if it is **exaggerated**!

The **theologically mistaken** leader may believe that as long as we keep our doctrine pure, the church will grow and bring glory to God! As someone else said, if that is true then **why** are we asked to fulfill the **Great Commission**? Because **that** is the main **means** God has **appointed** for bringing His people into the kingdom of His people! If your theology teaches you that God’s elect will automatically flock into your church when the ‘right time’ comes, your theology needs revision! People need to be **confronted** with the gospel!

The leader with **tunnel vision** who cannot think ‘out of the box’, will not be able to **engage** with people of **other sub-cultures** who need to be instructed in the essentials and defining elements of the gospel! If the leader constantly refers to the problems ‘**inside his box**’ the visitors will not **identify** with the point he’s making! So often leaders can scratch where it doesn’t itch! We must be understood!

The **lazy, non-committed, negligent** leader will be too **absorbed** with their **own interests** and their **own priorities** to attend at the ‘drop of a hat’, to any urgent needs of the congregation. The church, like every other organisation have matters that require urgent attention. If the leaders are **not** willing or able, for **whatever reason**,

to address the situation, then there will be **massive failure!** If, in the life of the leaders, other things take **precedence** over the **cares** and **responsibilities** of the church then the church will fail and die! Because the future of the church **does** lie in the hands of the kind of leaders it has!! The **commitment** of leaders to attend to the priorities of the **church** will **determine** the life and future of the church! It is a **fact** that churches die because Xn leaders are **negligent** of duties!

1) Leaders must have a **strong desire** for the job of **leading** God's people! A desire put there by God! If not a strong desire, then there **must** be a **strong sense of calling** to the job of leading God's people!

2) There must be **clarity** about the **objective/goal!** The long-term goal - and it **will be** long-term!! It is **not** simply to get people off drugs, or off alcohol. It is **not** simply to help people rectify their way through life. It **is** to get people **in Christ!** There **are plenty** organisations and **recovery centres** who can help people quit their bad habits! The work of the church is to get people into Jesus Christ!

3) Leaders must be willing to **persevere** amidst **discouragements!** Jesus said about workers in His Kingdom "*the labourers are few*"! There are too few people with the necessary **commitment!** Too few **real** workers, real **grafters**, real **sloggers!** Too few **persevering** labourers! The need for continual, constant working in the **midst** of **discouragements!** That is what it takes to bring **lasting** change to society! Read about **heroes** William Carey and John G Paton. And modern day Jackie Pullinger, who was **refused** by all the evangelical agencies to help her, literally took a slow boat to China and stepped of at the 'Walled City' in Hong Kong, a lawless place; police hesitate to enter; strangers are unwelcome; smuggling and heroin addiction flourish. Stepped over blood-stained bodies reaching new victims, she spoke to them of Jesus Christ - and many turned to the Lord!!

What is the **one great aim** of your life? Here is Apostle Paul's "*But **one thing** I do: forgetting what lies behind and **straining forward** to what lies ahead, I **press on toward the goal** for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way*" [Phil 3:13cf].