

# Pastoral Leadership

## Introduction

The early church was not perfect! There are many principles that we can learn from the life, example and witness of the church during the 1<sup>st</sup> century. But a reading of the New Testament reveals that there were also a number of harmful things that intruded into the church that threatened to harm it. We know that the church had to deal with immorality, prejudice, heresies, and so on. From its beginning the church therefore needed leaders to correct, challenge, reprove and give direction and thereby serve the Kingdom of God to His glory.

In the first century, and for many centuries that followed, there was no government assistance available to people in need and the principle of one nation helping another in times of disaster was not practised. Today significant changes have taken place in these matters and many (but not all) of the caring ministries carried have been taken over by the Government.

So, is there no role for the church in these areas today? Certainly not! The motivation that lay behind the church's involvement in helping the needy was compassion and love. Today both these things are still desperately needed and the church can still bring the love of Jesus Christ into the most stressful situations. Billy Graham has written, "Only the Gospel, God's Good News, has the power to change lives, heal hearts, and restore a nation,"

The church of today lives with the same mission of Jesus which He stated in the synagogue in Nazareth when He read from the book of Isaiah:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*

*Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:18-31)*

Despite some great works of aid that many governments provide, there are some things they are unable to do. For example, governments do not have a message that is capable of changing a human heart. And governments cannot speak about forgiveness or give an assurance of hope.

In I Corinthians 13 Paul wrote a wonderful hymn about love and he finished by saying, *'And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.'* (verse 13) Certainly there are many wonderful examples of Christian love in the first couple of centuries.

A Christian who lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Justyn Martyr, wrote:

*"We who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than anything else now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with anyone who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies."*

That is the mandate that Jesus gave His church; however to enable the church to do the mission that He has entrusted to us, we need good, godly and God-called leadership to reveal the vision, give direction, develop strategies and suggest structure that will provide opportunities to fulfil the vision,

Leaders also have a responsibility to help develop people's gifts and co-ordinate, motivate and enable them to use their gifts effectively.

Clarification on the definition and understanding of leadership – especially pastoral leadership - is becoming a pressing need on the Church today in spite of, or perhaps because of, the many and varied books being written on the subject. Leadership is a

lively topic in today's church, but as it is being given such broad definitions, its essential meaning, insofar as it relates to a Biblical understanding of leadership, is being eroded. Who are the leaders? What makes a leader? What are the functions of a leader? Answers vary and often are determined by one's psychological, theological, or ecclesiological perspectives. Thus there appears to be little agreement, even among those who write on the subject, as to what leadership really is. J.M. Burns astutely observes:

*'Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.'*<sup>1</sup>

Some speak of a crisis of leadership in the world in general and within the Church in particular, with people holding positions of power for which they are most unsuited. While there is unquestionable value in secular books that explore the subject of leadership, such books have been written from largely sociological and psychological perspectives rather than a Biblical one. The dynamics operating in each position are quite different and one can not easily transfer the skills, demands, expectations and particularly the philosophical bases and values of leaders in a commercial business to the shepherd-leader. There are inevitably areas of overlap, but the theocratic dimension of the Church makes it distinctively different from a secular organisation.

### ***OFFICE OR FUNCTION***

Having planted a Church outside the traditional mainline structures in which I had ministered for twenty five years I found it necessary to redefine the nature of pastoral leadership. The denominational structure I left had its own neatly defined classifications, perceptions and expectations of leadership, but I found that for a newly planted Church much of that was now largely irrelevant and redundant. Therefore a new model had to be implemented. I sought to define more clearly the leadership models given in the Scriptures, and particularly sought to discover how leadership was exercised in the early Church. I became very aware that the concept of leadership in the New Testament had become corrupted by centuries of institutionalism within the Church.

The New Testament makes it evident that church leaders were not appointed to an office but to a function. Hans Kung writes:

*‘The New Testament avoids secular terms relating to “office” precisely because they denote a relationship of domination.’<sup>2</sup>*

This needs to be noted. Pastoral leadership in the early church must essentially be understood in terms of **function**. In New Testament times elders, bishops and deacons were not appointed to titled positions but to functional roles. There were tasks to be performed, and those in whom were seen the necessary graces, character and anointing were appointed to them. This is made clear, for example, in the appointing of the first deacons. The apostles made this recommendation, “*Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.*” (Acts 6:3 NIV) We misunderstand the terminology used in the New Testament if we consider the ministries of Church leaders in terms of status rather than that of service. Frank Damazio observes:

*‘The work was more important than the rank, and the early Church put her emphasis on the function of the saints of God, rather than on their official position.’<sup>3</sup>*

And to that Michael Harper adds:

*‘We should hesitate before being dogmatic about “office” when the New Testament is very much more concerned with “function.”’<sup>4</sup>*

To the two disciples who were lobbying for positions of status and prestige Jesus said, “*You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.*” (Mark 10:42-43) Thus Jesus taught that an inherent and indispensable characteristic of leadership in the Kingdom of God was humble service.

Yet the distinction between the elevated position of the clergy and the lowly place of the laity has been nourished within the Church from the fourth century, particularly

from the conversion of Constantine in AD 313 when Christianity became acceptable and respectable. The hierarchical structure of the Church, with the concept of the prestigious 'offices' of leadership - which created a separation between the leaders and those whom they were leading - became strengthened and entrenched. It is to be regretted that within the contemporary Church leadership is still largely understood in terms of office, position and prestige. And this is perpetuated by the type of professionalism in the Church which measures ministerial worth and success in terms of steady advancement and promotion through the hierarchical positions of the Church. However A.W. Tozer pointedly comments:

*'A true and safe leader is likely to be one who has no desire to lead, but is forced into a position of leadership by the inward pressure of the Holy Spirit and the press of the external situation. ... I believe it might be accepted as a fairly safe rule of thumb that the man who is ambitious to lead is disqualified as a leader. The true leader will have no desire to lord it over God's heritage, but will be humble, gentle, self-sacrificing and altogether as ready to follow as to lead, when the Spirit makes it clear that a wiser and more gifted man than himself has appeared.'*<sup>5</sup>

### **LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRE**

Possibly in response to the privileged status role that the Church for centuries has given to its leaders - perhaps even in reaction to it - there has been in more recent years among some an emphasis on egalitarianism within the Church in which the role of leadership has been downsized. Pastoral leadership is now often understood as 'doing what the congregation asks and expects for it is the congregation who pays the pastor's salary.' Democracy rather than theocracy is the governing principle of many churches today. Directions may be decided upon and programmes implemented whether or not the Pastor agrees with them, and the role of the Pastor is often understood as that of ensuring that the wishes of the congregation are carried out. In fact in this we are witnessing a reversal of the leadership roles - the congregation (or the Parish Council or the Council of elders - or whatever the authority-group is called) leads, and the Pastor follows! What has brought about this reversal? It is not easy to identify the reasons; I should make two suggestions:

### **1. Higher education**

The authoritative role of leader in the church was unquestioned for centuries when the ‘clergy’ were the educated section of the Church and as such enjoyed privileges and titles that were denied the ‘uneducated laity.’ They were the unchallenged leaders because of their greater education. Although educational achievement was not the basis on which leaders were appointed in the early Church, in the Middle Ages it became an important factor. David Watson writes:

*‘The “clergy” soon became a distinguished class, marked by certain privileges, immunities, dress, titles, culture and liturgy (in Latin).’<sup>6</sup>*

Philip King suggests that after the 1940s when higher education became more available, leadership was one of the many things that were questioned. It is a valid point. Long held assumptions were now being challenged. What is leadership? Who should exercise it? What are the limitations of leadership? Who appoints leaders? The concept of the right of the ‘educated class’ to lead was now questioned, and the concept of the equality of all strongly emerged. On the one hand this was a healthy development; on the other hand the concept of equality became misapplied. King quotes Montgomery who in 1975 wrote:

*‘... because of muddled thinking about equality, many sections of Western society are suspicious of the whole idea of the necessity for leadership ...’<sup>7</sup>*

That particular change in Western world view regarding leadership clearly impacted the Church.

### **2. Every member ministry**

The rediscovery of the important Biblical principle of ‘every member ministry’ in recent years has had a negative influence on the church as well as a positive one. On the positive side it is good to note that more Christians are recognising that they have an active, participatory role in the advancement of the Kingdom of God and that God has so distributed His gifts that every Christian is important and has a relevant

ministry to exercise. DePree makes the same point with reference to business practice:

*'Diversity allows each of us to contribute in a special way, to make our special gift a part of the corporate effort.'*<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately this emphasis did not have a concomitant and complementary emphasis on the place of leadership. King writes:

*"We have so emphasised the priesthood of all believers," complained one minister in the Midlands, "that we have forgotten the need for leadership." Without leadership "every member ministry" can become inward looking and lack the mission goals that compel the body of believers to act and witness in the world.'*<sup>9</sup>

Clearly cultural and theological trends have impacted our understanding of pastoral leadership, and that not always for the good. King expresses his conviction that the pendulum has now begun to swing in the opposite direction, in that there is some indication that people are now beginning to want strong directive leadership.

### ***INDISPENSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP***

Good leadership is a Biblical concept; it is a divine initiative and not a human invention. It is, in fact, an indispensable requirement for the successful functioning of the Body of Christ. Both by modeling the nature and requirements of leadership through particular persons in the Old and New Testaments, and by direct teaching on the qualifications of leadership, particularly in the Pastoral Epistles, the Scriptures make it clear how vital leadership is. Frank Damazio makes the point:

*'God's purpose for the Church is to bring many sons to glory. For the Church to reach this goal, her leaders must lead the way.'*<sup>10</sup>

The children of Israel remained in Egypt for four hundred years, enduring enormous hardships and opposition particularly in the latter years, until a leader was provided for them in the person of Moses. (Exodus 12) For seven years the Israelites suffered under

the oppression of the Midianites until God raised up Gideon to lead them out of their trouble. ‘The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"’ (Judges 6:14) Jesus too appointed leaders to lead the Church into its Kingdom ministries; *‘He appointed twelve - designating them apostles - that they might be with him and that He might send them out to preach.’* (Mark 3:14) When churches were being planted under the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, they appointed leaders to those churches - *‘Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church ...’* (Acts 14:23) Leaders clearly had and continue to have an indispensable role to play in the advancement of God’s Kingdom and in the accomplishment of His purposes through His Church.

### **1. Leaders help to give a sense of identity to a group**

Jesus said, *‘My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.’* (John 10:27) We are Christians because we follow Jesus Christ. He gives us our overall identity. However that sense of identity needs to be broken down into smaller units, and this is provided by the local church. Without a leader’s bringing a sense of identity to a group the result is insecurity. I found this to be true when my church was initially formed. Those who first belonged to it had previously been part of the church from which we separated. Along with the spirit of anticipation there was also an apprehension. They had severed their ties from one group and had need of a sense of identification with another. My role as leader was to restore a sense of identity by reinforcing an awareness of the cohesiveness and unity of the new group and to articulate its values and goals. There is a sense in which the leader represents the ethos of the group, and from this it obtains its identity. Harris W. Lee makes the point:

*‘The ... function of leadership is to symbolize the standards and expectations of the organisation. ... Leadership must be a personification of the organization’s vision and commitment.’<sup>11</sup>*

Without a sense of identification, of having the assurance that one belongs to a group, bewilderment, insecurity, separateness and aloneness have a debilitating effect on one’s spirit. *‘When He (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.’* (Matthew 9:36) A

fragmented church without a sense of identity or unity will inadequately minister for Jesus Christ in its community. It is the pastor-leader's responsibility to be such a shepherd to his people that they may be secure in their self-identification, know what they stand for and thereby be released to minister with confidence. In another context Field-Marshal Montgomery has offered this definition of leadership:

*'Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose {my italics} and the character which inspires confidence.'*<sup>12</sup>

## **2. Leaders must bring a sense of caring to a group**

A leader must convey to those whom he leads that they are not just names on a membership roll, but precious family members whom he loves and for whom he cares. Leadership is often understood in terms of domination - and this way is how it is often expressed. However leadership according to the Biblical pattern should reflect the Father heart of God. *'As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.'* (Psa 103:13) This speaks of relationship, and the establishing and developing of relationships is essential. DePree observes:

*'Leadership is more tribal than scientific, more weaving of relationships than an amassing of information ... Effective influencing and understanding spring largely from healthy relationships among members of the group.'*<sup>13</sup>

The leader needs to have a heart for those he leads, and they in turn must know that he cares for them. Such caring can be expressed in different ways - in comforting, encouraging, challenging and disciplining. Damazio comments:

*'May each leader believe God for a heart of compassion and kindness in his ministry. Every leader should believe God for close relationships with people in the family of God. ... The leader must set an example of kindness for others to follow.'*<sup>14</sup>

People need to feel that they are wanted and loved, and if the leader can communicate that to those he leads, they will in turn be more ready to make allowances for his failures and inadequacies!

### **3. Leaders must bring a sense of direction to the group**

A leader is called to lead, to give direction, to point the way. Failure to do that is a disqualification for leadership as the Bible understands the term. While for many leaders the outworking of their leadership necessitates their involvement in management duties, it is misunderstood if it is seen essentially in terms of management and the application of business practices. Damazio comments:

*'If the practices of business executives take priority over the specific guidelines of the Word of God, the Church will be a large but lifeless organization (as many churches are today), instead of a growing and lively spiritual organism. ... Leaders who view the Church as a corporation, instead of a New Covenant community, also tend to see the Church's programs as marketing tools.'*<sup>15</sup>

As a newly formed group we needed to know that God had planted us for a specific purpose and that He would reveal that purpose to us. My role as leader was (and is) to encourage the people to understand that we were moving forward with God, that He was in charge of the direction we were going, and that we would divest ourselves from much of the organizational practices of the past which were in many ways obstacles to faith and vision. That is not to deny the need for some organizing, but the organizing is now there to serve the vision we are following. The realisation that we are actually 'going somewhere' is faith-developing for the people. DePree comments:

*'Momentum comes from a clear vision of what the corporation ought to be.'*<sup>16</sup>

### **THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEADER**

Affirming the 'function' of pastoral leadership over the 'office' does not remove the need for authority in leadership. Authority in itself is not wrong - it is morally judged

in its use or abuse. Without authority there is indiscipline and confusion. Leadership failure in Israel led to the situation in which the judgment is twice made, ‘In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.’ (Judges 17:6 & 21:25 KJV)

The right use of authority is indispensable for the security, unity, healthy growth and effective ministry of the church. The ‘right use of authority’ is, of course, the problem. The challenge to ecclesiastical leadership authority which has been evident this century, particularly, as we have seen, since the 1940s, has been largely justified as such authority has been abused over many centuries. David Watson observes:

*‘As the church of the second and third centuries decreased in spiritual power, so did its spiritual authority. And in its place institutional and legal authority grew in strength.’<sup>17</sup>*

Indeed a merging of the concept of ecclesiastical authority with spiritual authority contributed largely to a weakening of emphasis on the spiritual development of the people and the strengthening of positions of domination by the leaders. Damazio comments:

*‘The culmination of this move to give supreme authority to the bishops is illustrated in the way that Ignatius of Antioch referred to the bishop. “We ought to regard the Bishop as the Lord Himself,” wrote Ignatius.’<sup>18</sup>*

Such seeking after positions of authority stands in stark contrast to the attitude of the One ‘Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant ... ‘ (Philippians 2:6-7) More on this later.

The most commonly used Greek word for authority used in the New Testament is ἐξουσία which refers to a rightful exercise of power. While that concept conjures up for some the idea of domination, that need not necessarily be the case as a rightful exercise of power may, in fact, be benevolent. In fact the New Testament closely associates authority with service. The One who said, ‘All authority in heaven and on

*earth has been given to me,*’ (Matthew 28:18) also said, *‘I am among you as one who serves.’* (Luke 22:27)

Before exploring this I must comment on how Biblical leadership authority is *not* expressed. Dictatorship is not a Biblical model of leadership for the church! The example set by Jesus was graciously and compassionately exercised through relationship. Furthermore Jesus led by example. When His followers looked at Him they saw transparency, integrity, truthfulness and dependability. Jesus was authentic! He was honest! He was trustworthy!

In Paul’s description of a leader similar characteristics are emphasised in 1 Timothy 3:2-7:

*‘A church leader must be **without fault**; he must have only one wife, be **sober, self-controlled, and orderly**; he must **welcome strangers** in his home; he must be **able to teach**; he must **not be a drunkard or a violent man, but gentle and peaceful**; he must **not love money**; he must be **able to manage his own family well and make his children obey him with all respect**. For if a man does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of the church of God? He must be **mature in the faith**, so that he will **not swell up with pride** and be condemned, as the Devil was.*

*He should be a man who is **respected by the people outside the church**, so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the Devil's trap.’* (GNB)

The Biblical standard of leadership in the church is exceptionally high and no one should casually enter into this role.

### **SOME BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR LEADERS**

Apart from the standards mentioned in 1 Timothy 3, the following requirements are also very relevant to leadership.

(i) **Leaders are called**: There is one basic, and often ignored, principle in Christian leadership – God’s call. Only those whom **God** has called to be leaders should serve as leaders! Appointment to leadership must not be seen as a reward for faithfulness, enthusiasm, ability or desire to become a leader. Certainly faithfulness, enthusiasm, ability, commitment and a love for God are admirable characteristics that leaders should have, but separately or together they are no substitute for a divine call.

Consider some of the people mentioned in the Bible who were called to be leaders.

**Moses** *‘I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.’*  
(Exodus 3:10)

**Joshua** *‘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.’* (Joshua 1:5-6)

**Samuel** *‘The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."’* (1Samuel 3:10)

**Isaiah** *‘Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" He said, "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving."’* (Isaiah 6:8-9)

**Jeremiah** *‘Get ready, Jeremiah; go and tell them everything I command you to say. Do not be afraid of them now, or I will make you even more afraid when you are with them.’* (Jeremiah 1:17)

**The Twelve Apostles** *'He (Jesus) appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed ...'* (Mark 3:14-16)

**Paul** *'Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.'* (Romans 1:1)

It is important that those who come into leadership have the conviction and the assurance that they have been called by God into leadership and have the confidence that this is God's will and purpose for them. No one should take up that role unless he is assured of that divine call on his life. Likewise, no one should be flattered to accept a leadership role because some other leader has issued that invitation.

(ii) **Leaders are trained.** Even though God calls a person to be a leader, all leaders need to be trained to cope intelligently and wisely with the difficult and demanding requirements of leadership. In many churches today training seems to be considered as having minimum importance. Some people even make the claim, "I don't need to be trained for I trust in the Holy Spirit." That may have the appearance of admirable spirituality but it does, in fact, reflect not only an ignorance of what the Bible teaches, but it also smacks of spiritual arrogance! Consider some of the Biblical examples of leadership that we have.

Consider Moses. He was an extraordinary leader who led God's people from tyranny and captivity in Egypt to the Promised Land. In that 40 year journey Moses had to deal with many difficulties as the often rebellious crowd of refugees were forged into a nation of Israel. When we read the story of Moses in the Bible, we discover that he had an 80 year period of preparation before he was ready for the task! First, he received training in many practical areas in Pharaoh's household. Secondly, in the desert of Midian, where he looked after flocks of sheep, God continued to deal with him before received the explicit call from God's to perform one of the greatest leadership feats in history.

Not everyone called to be a leader obviously needs such extensive training, but all leaders nevertheless need to be prepared for the breathtaking responsibility to lead

God's people in a wise and God-honouring way.

(iii) **Leaders are servants.** Leadership is a service and not a privileged office to which people should aspire. Jesus made it perfectly clear to His disciple that servant-leadership was the model He required from those he called.

Before Jesus was betrayed and executed, He shared a final meal with His disciples. Amazingly we read that an argument was taking place among the disciple about which one of them was the greatest in the Kingdom of God. Jesus stepped into the argument and said to them:

*"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But **I am among you as one who serves.**" (Luke 22:27)*

The Greek word that has been translated as 'serves' literally refers to a person who attends to the needs of others. It is a lowly position. To the disciples who were bickering about *status*, Jesus turned the focus around and talked to them about *service*. Status is unimportant; service is all important. This is a difficult truth for proud human hearts to grasp!

To reinforce His point and to put end their foolish and petty argument about which of them was the most important, Jesus arose and, leading by example, did an extraordinary thing. We read about it in John 13:4-15,

*'He (Jesus) got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

*He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered,*

*"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"*

*Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.*

*When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **I have set you an example** that you should do as I have done for you."*

The point that Jesus was making here by this striking and unforgettable act was that leadership is expressed through humility and not pride, and through serving rather than being served.

Paul wrote in Philippians 2:5-7,

*'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a **servant** ...'*

The Greek word that has here been translated is *doulos* which means 'slave'. In the Roman world of that day, a slave was in the lowest social position. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Creator of the universe voluntarily became a slave for our sake. Jesus so unmistakably demonstrated that true leadership requires the heart of a servant/slave.

**(i) What pastoral authority is not**

Pastoral leadership is not practised through an imposition of power. Leadership exercised in a domineering manner exchanges authority for authoritarianism. Leadership according to the Biblical pattern does not coerce. Authority improperly

exercised is a binding thing that crushes the spirit and generates resentment. Considering the state of the Church in the Middle Ages it is not surprising, therefore, to note the comment made by Boniface VIII in 1297:

*'The fact that the laity is hostile to the clergy is something which antiquity has handed on to us so clearly.'*<sup>19</sup>

Pastoral leadership does not seek to use its authority to control, to bring into submission or to compel others to follow a certain course. Authority that is exercised through a spirit of domination is not true pastoral leadership. Authoritarian leadership is severe and tyrannical and fails to respect the spirit of love and humility that is characteristic of the New Testament's definition of leadership.

**(ii) What pastoral authority is**

**(a) *The authority of Jesus:*** The great exemplar of authority in pastoral leadership is Jesus Christ. Jesus ministered with an authority which was readily recognised. *'They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority. ... All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!"'* (Luke 4:32 & 36 NIV) There was a confidence, indeed a boldness, in the way that Jesus exercised authority, yet He did not threaten nor impel. Jesus was confident in His authority; He knew that it was not something on which He had to insist. He recognised that His authority was given by the Father and that He was acting on behalf of the Father, thus His words and His actions reflected that. His authority was interpreted in terms of service, not in suppression of others. It was a spiritual authority which was not associated with any notion of 'position' or 'prestige.' Damazio rightly points out:

*'Jesus Christ, who had more reason to Lord His authority over people than any of His undershepherds, was the example of the Good Shepherd to the flock of God. He firmly taught His position minded apostles that leadership in the kingdom of God was different than leadership in the world.'*<sup>20</sup>

(b) ***The authority of the early church leaders:*** The apostle Paul ministered with undeniable authority yet he used it wisely, compassionately and in a non-domineering way. He defined his understanding of his authority in this way: ‘For even if I boast somewhat freely about *the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down*, I will not be ashamed of it.’ (2 Cor 10:8 NIV) He again used a similar phrase a few chapters later, ‘... I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority - *the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.*’ (2 Cor 13:10 NIV) Nevertheless Paul did not hesitate to use his authority to speak strongly to people and against situations that were out of keeping with the will and word of God. He understood that God’s authority, which had been delegated to him, required that he so act at times, but his exercise of that authority was ever to build people up in their faith and in their relationship with the Lord and not to destroy them. Thus Paul saw that his pastoral leadership role was one of enabling people to become what God intended them to be.

To Timothy, whom Paul encouraged in the ministry of pastoral leadership, Paul wrote, ‘... *set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*’ (1 Timothy 4:12 NIV) Similarly to Titus he wrote, ‘*In everything set them an example by doing what is good.*’ (Titus 2:7) They were encouraged, therefore, to lead by example, and in so doing there was no place for the exercise of oppressive authority. And the elders who were given the authority to ‘direct the affairs of the church,’ (1 Timothy 5:17) were charged with the responsibility of taking ‘take care of God's church.’ (1 Timothy 3:5) Peter too instructed against leadership that was authoritarian. He wrote, ‘...*not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*’ (1 Peter 5:3)

Hans Kung makes this perceptive comment concerning Paul:

*‘Paul was never afraid to bring his authority into play. Yet it is characteristic of the Spirit of Christ that impelled Paul, that he did not exploit his mandatory power... Instead of issuing prohibitions, he appealed to the individuals’ judgment and responsibility. Instead of*

*constraint, he sought to convince. Instead of imposing himself, he exhorted.*<sup>21</sup>

**(c ) Authority in the Church:** The Church can not exist without authority. If the leader is to exercise effective leadership, he must have authority; however leaders can only minister in the authority which has been delegated to them by God. The authority of a pastoral leader is not gained by theological training or even given by the Church in the act of ordination. Nor are those Christians, whose personalities and natural giftings mark them out as having leadership potential, necessarily to be appointed to the ministry of pastoral leadership. Michael Harper has written:

*'... the Church can only authorise those whom God whom God has gifted and empowered. No amount of theological training or human pressure can bestow charisma on a person. It is the sole gift of God who gives it sovereignly to whom he wills, and when he wills.'*<sup>22</sup>

It is God Who calls and authorises, and to those who hear and respond to that call God's authority is delegated. That assurance can give confidence in one's ministry. So it was with Paul who did not doubt his calling to be an apostle nor the divine authority that accompanied the call. He therefore was able strongly to assert '*... that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority - the authority the Lord gave me ...*' (2 Corinthians 13:10) I found that assurance of God's call to be a comfort and encouragement when I withdrew from the denominational structure in which I had served for a quarter of a century - my authority to lead was not bestowed by any denomination (if it had it could likewise be withdrawn) but had been delegated to me by the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ.

**(d) Authority and anointing:** Not only does God appoint but He also anoints, and the purpose of the anointing of the Holy Spirit is to make effective the ministry He has given. In Old Testament times oil was used as a symbol of God's anointing and as such signified the setting apart by God of those whom He had called into particular leadership ministries. The importance of God's anointing on a leader's life is seen at the baptism of Jesus when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for service. (Luke 3:21-22) When Jesus began His ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth, He announced:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed.” (Luke 4:18)*

Damazio comments:

*‘Christ stands at the centre of the Bible’s teaching about the anointing of the Holy Spirit ... Many of God’s dealings in calling and preparing leadership vary from person to person. But the anointing of the Holy Spirit is essential in every believer’s life. And without it, a believer has no true and lasting ministry.’<sup>23</sup>*

Authority without anointing is a sterile thing which is likely to do more harm than good. Spiritual authority must be exercised and empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit; if it is not, leadership is counter-productive and fruitless. It is the anointing that validates the authority. Without the anointing pastoral leadership will not produce works for the Kingdom of God that will last. It is of critical importance, therefore, that pastoral leaders remain in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Bob Gordon comments:

*‘It (the anointing) confirms that we have God’s authority to carry out our ministry. When we, and others, see signs of the anointing of God on our lives, we know that He has delegated His authority to us and is confirming our ministry in the situation. This confirmation of our authority cannot be worked up or be sourced in human effort - it can only come from God. ... If you have not got God’s anointing, you may as well give up trying to operate in a place of authority, such as any form of church leadership.’<sup>24</sup>*

Above all it is the anointing of God on pastoral leadership that distinguishes it from all other kinds of leadership. And leadership - even if it is of God’s appointing - which is not under the anointing of God must resort to second rate human methods and techniques which are always ultimately inadequate in getting the work of the Kingdom done. A rediscovery of the anointing of the Holy Spirit is one of the most pressing needs in pastoral leadership today.

## ***SHARED LEADERSHIP***

Leadership is not a one-man-band. In the context of the local church the weight of the responsibility of leadership should not rest with one person - it must be shared. The value of team-leadership is not just a recent management discovery - it is a sound Biblical principle. Moses, who demonstrated superlative leadership skills, yet experienced the stress of leadership and cried out to God, *'I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.'* (Numbers 11:14) God's response was to appoint seventy others who *'... will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.'* (Numbers 11:17) Also Jesus at the beginning of His ministry selected twelve men not only to train in ministry but also to share His ministry. The early church also embraced the concept of team ministry; in Acts 14 we read that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders to serve the churches that had been planted, thus we discover that leadership teams had oversight of the ministry of the local churches.

Team leadership may serve at least five functions. *First*, it provides the opportunity of sharing leadership responsibilities and tasks, and thereby helps to prevent stress. *Secondly* it provides a forum in which problems and ministry opportunities may be carefully and prayerfully considered that one may better arrive at the mind of God. *Thirdly*, it offers a 'check and balance' mechanism which may prevent the implementing of inappropriate decisions. *Fourthly*, it makes available the necessary encouragement and support that all leaders need. And *fifthly*, it utilizes a broader spectrum of spiritual gifting. A leadership team composed of people of quite different personalities and variety of gifting working in relationship with one another, enriches church leadership; Bob Gordon makes this observation:

*'Shared leadership who are in unity in Christ and who work/act with one heart and mind for Christ, form a powerful partnership the effectiveness of which far outweighs anything a lone leader could hope to achieve.'*<sup>25</sup>

Shared leadership is not, however, without its dangers. On the one hand a team of 'yes men' serves only the ego of the senior leader and not the best interests of the Kingdom

or the church. On the other hand discord and power struggles within the leadership create great tensions and have a debilitating effect not only on the team but also on the life of the whole church. Furthermore, differences of opinion may lead to splits, as was the case with Paul and Barnabas regarding the taking of Mark on the second mission. Therefore one has to be alert to the potential of conflict within the team. A further danger is to allow the principle of democracy to intrude into leadership meetings; one must ever remember that vital leadership is that which seeks the mind of Christ and is in submission to His rule. Damazio also reminds us:

*‘The argument for a plural, co-equal leadership as the highest authority in the local church does not stand up to the test of careful scriptural examination... The eldership is definitely a local church ruling body. It operates, however, under the direction of the senior ministry ...’<sup>26</sup>*

The effectiveness of a leadership team outweighs that of a leader who leads alone, and the risk of encountering problems within the team are more than balanced by the potential for good through the sharing of insights, gifts and encouragement as the team seeks to lead the church to achieve its God-given objectives.

### ***THE NECESSITY OF VISION***

Significant leadership can not take place in any sphere of life without vision. No organisation can have a sense of direction, is able to set goals or be motivated towards accomplishment without a vision. This is particularly true within the life of the Church. Harris W. Lee states:

*‘If there is no vision - no dream, plan, or captivating intention - the congregation will be in the doldrums; they will not be the vital people the Spirit calls them to be. On the other hand, if the congregation has a clear sense of mission and a vision for the future, you can expect the people to exhibit courage and vitality.’<sup>27</sup>*

Performance and accomplishment are dependent on a vision to be pursued. How true is the quotation, *‘Where there is no vision, the people perish.’* (Proverbs 29:18)

### **1. The source of the vision**

Vision is sometimes understood to be an inventive scheme or a bright idea. I am using the term to mean that goal which God specifically gives - it is a *spiritual* vision, and as such it so inspires, enervates, excites and fills the Christian with expectation that he will (as William Carey is supposed to have said) 'attempt great things for God and expect great things from God.' Bob Gordon quotes Charles Swindoll:

*'Vision is essential for survival. It is spawned by faith, sustained by hope, sparked by imagination and strengthened by enthusiasm. It is greater than sight, deeper than a dream, broader than an idea. Vision encompasses vast vistas outside the realm of the predictable, the safe, the expected. No wonder we perish without it.'*<sup>28</sup>

Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Nehemiah and all other spiritual leaders mentioned in the Bible were people of vision. There can be no true leadership without vision - I found it surprising, therefore, that Damazio places little emphasis on it in his book *'The Making of a Leader.'* DePree includes this comment:

*'The only kind of leadership worth following is based on vision.'*<sup>29</sup>

God is still looking for leaders in whose hearts to implant His vision. Spiritual vision does not come through planning, discussion or choosing between alternative courses of action. God is the source of the vision and it is given by revelation. Gordon comments:

*'God-given vision is the product of God working in us. He creates the vision and we simply receive it into ourselves... Vision arises out of a burden to know and do the will of God and to become whatever God wants us to become.'*<sup>30</sup>

It is possible for a church to pursue its own plans and programmes at the expense of the vision that God wants to give. As a leadership team in a newly planted church we sought to avoid the temptation of implementing good ideas and decided to ask God, as our Leader, to show His plans for us. We have discovered that ministry that is based on vision rather than on programmes is more challenging, more exciting, more faith strengthening and more satisfying. Leaders need to be people of vision and not just be

good managers if they are going to extend the faith of those they lead, introduce them into fruitful Kingdom ministries and help them to see beyond what is to what can be!

## **2. The sharing of vision**

It is not sufficient for the leader alone to have the vision; if it does not stir the hearts of those who are being led, and if it is not shared and owned, it will be stillborn. If the vision is to be implemented, the pastoral leader needs to articulate and share it - it must become a corporate vision if it is to be realised. DePree states:

*‘Only through good communication can we convey and preserve a common corporate vision.’<sup>31</sup>*

The other members of the church must make it their own and work for its fulfillment through the exercise of their gifts. The leader needs not only to be inspired but also to inspire others to commitment to the vision. Nehemiah serves as an example of infectious sharing of vision. To him God gave the vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem; the task was uninviting as it appeared to be virtually impossible. Even his enemies scorned the project. (Nehemiah 4:3-3) But Nehemiah shared the vision with the people; *‘Then I said to them, "... Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem ..." ‘* (Nehemiah 2:17) The people responded enthusiastically, *‘They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.’* (Nehemiah 2:18) In the weeks that followed the people worked with enthusiasm and confidence soared as they saw the wall begin to rise. While the outworking of the vision is the responsibility of the whole church, it is the responsibility of the pastoral leader to ensure that the people are encouraged and that the work stays on track so that the vision may be fulfilled. Bob Gordon comments:

*‘Visionaries are ultimately responsible for the fulfilment of a God-given vision (no matter how many enablers and sustains they have.) ... They need to count the cost of responsibility and pay it, in order to have the right to continue to lead the vision.’<sup>32</sup>*

In the outworking of vision true expression can be given to the Body of Christ in which each part fulfills its assigned task.

Pastoral leadership is a key element in the enabling of the Church to find and fulfill its mission in the world. It is vital, therefore, that the essential Scriptural principles of leadership are rediscovered and implemented in many areas of the church where they are missing. Unless the real dynamics of pastoral leadership are integrated into pastoral ministry, its scope is reduced to that of maintenance ministry, and pastors become mere caretakers of a dying institution.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> J.M. Burns, *Leadership*, New York; Harper & Row, 1978, page 2

<sup>2</sup> Hans Kung, *Why Priests*, London; Fontana, 1972, page 26.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Damazio, *The Making of a Leader*, Portland; Bible Temple Publishing, 1988, page 14

<sup>4</sup> Michael Harper, *Let My People Grow*, London; Hodder and Stoughton, 1977 page 32

<sup>5</sup> A.W. Tozer; source unidentified

<sup>6</sup> David Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, London; Hodder and Stoughton, 1978 page 249

<sup>7</sup> Philip King, *Leadership Explosion*, London; Hodder and Stoughton, 1987 page 37.

<sup>8</sup> Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art*, New York; Dell Publishing, 1989, page 9.

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., page 37

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit., page 106

<sup>11</sup> Harris W. Lee, *Effective Church Leadership*, Minneapolis; Augsburg Fortress, 1989 page 29

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, Bromley; Lakeland/STL, 1981 page 19

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., page 3 and 25

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., page 225

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., page 2.

<sup>16</sup> Op. cit., page 18

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., page 263

<sup>18</sup> Op. cit., page 15

<sup>19</sup> Quoted by David Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, page 249

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit., page 30

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit., pages 85-85

<sup>22</sup> Op. cit., page 100

<sup>23</sup> Op. cit., page 301

<sup>24</sup> Bob Gordon, *Master Builders*, Chichester; Sovereign World, 1990 page 100

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., page 241

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., page 24

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., page 133

<sup>28</sup> Op. cit., page 286

<sup>29</sup> Op. cit., page 133

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., page 288

<sup>31</sup> Op. cit., page 107

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit., page 292

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