



# LEADING CHANGE

Final Paper

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## Statement of Problem

The setting is my current ministry setting. I work as the Care Minister for a small church in Lower Manhattan composed of 300 regular members and various numbers of visitors every week. I have been in the congregation of this church for 6 years and have worked as the Care Minister for the last 2 ½ years. Our current structure, made up of a Lead Pastor, a Care Minister, a Children's Minister and a Youth Minister as the only full time staff and several part time workers to include worship leaders and a volunteer bookkeeper, is very different than it was 2 ½ years ago. A little over two years ago we had the same staff listed above (although different people) with the addition of a different Lead Pastor and a full time Administrator within the church. Though we would come to find out that structure was all smoke and mirrors, at the time it seemed to be working very well. The change from this prior construct was caused by a Lead Pastor deciding that he wanted to be a Pentecostal church (without ever discussing this with the congregation) and it was later found out that he was on some medication that made him very erratic so he was asked to take sabbatical. This whole situation was very unsettling and caused huge turmoil in the fact that he was forcing some change within the church as well as being slowly pushed out, so this caused major confusion in the congregation and the staff. Simultaneously, it was discovered that the very "competent" administrator had been embezzling large sums of money from the church and she was fired and there was a subsequent lawsuit. This very abrupt change in direction, lead pastors and criminal behavior brought massive chaos to the structure that so many expected and had become accustomed to over the 13- year life of this church.

The ideal picture would be one of a natural rhythm where job descriptions and procedures were clearly laid out and everyone knew what was expected of them and was held to that

standard on a consistent basis. I came from a 25- year military career and although it wasn't perfect, there was never any doubt what your job was and what was expected. People were held to a standard that was clearly defined and if it changed, the team was informed, and everyone was made aware of the reasons and the new way forward. The church has been reeling from the embezzlement and the subsequent lawsuit for firing this administrator which was baseless and has now gone away as well as the church and, specifically the staff, trying to figure out how to fill all the gaps that were left in this transition. My ideal for staffing and work function would be for everyone to sit together and discuss and codify job descriptions so that everyone knows what everyone else is doing and no tasks are left unassigned. On the theological front, I would love to know as well as be able to convey to the congregation what direction the church is heading and how we can all be praying and shoring that up. The vision of the church has been dismantled (it was truly clear for many years) and now the new lead pastor is trying to convey what his vision is to a church that is confused and still reeling from all the change.

My current reality is that the Associate Pastor was forced into a Lead Pastor role in the middle of a massive chaotic time and we had some other people quit or get fired during that same time period. We do not seem to be recovering very quickly from any of that and I do not blame that on the current Pastor. He is still reeling it would seem. The issue is that I can't get a clear vision of where the church is going now and what we are trying to accomplish. The current Pastor is a huge people pleaser and changes his mind dependent on where the most pressure is being applied. Our staff is disjointed at best and everyone is trying to fill gaps, but we need a clear direction and clear job descriptions written out and codified and agreed on by all. We have a lay team of pastors that serve as a board of elders, but the new Pastor does not seem to use them very effectively to help in vision casting or decision making. I am sad about the confusion and the

lack of any level of change management as we went down this road almost three years ago now. It was handled horribly from internal to the staff as well as the communication to the congregation. God has redeemed some of that and is growing and blessing the church again, but it has been and still is a rocky place to work. Everyone has acknowledged that we have some real work to do but we also seem to be complacent when no one is complaining. We are very reactionary right now instead of putting measures and structures in place to allow for some stability. It would seem we are starting to employ some correct administrative procedures, but they are being handed down piece meal and that can also cause confusion and disinterest. In Army terminology, there is no hammer. There are no consequences for not doing something and it would seem we just scramble most days to try to hold it together. I would love to be able to walk us all through some concrete ways to solidify our structure and give people vision and ownership of what we are doing as a church all predicated on what God ultimately wants from this church and its people.

### Biblical Foundations

Proverbs 29:18-25 has never been more relevant. King Solomon is writing to impart wisdom to the followers in Israel and he states in verse 18 that “Where there is no Vision (or Revelation), the people perish; but he that keeps the law, happy is he. This scripture was written in keeping with people adhering to the Torah and the laws as they were laid out, not necessarily following a leader’s vision but one already set in prophecy in the Bible. A discussion about New Testament scripture will follow later in this discussion but for the purposes of this scripture, it is saying something extremely specific to church leaders and those that choose to follow them and God. The vision from the Bible and God’s kingdom work must be understood and articulated. People must know what is expected not from a church leader but a leader who is telling them what is

expected from God because no restraint (word used in the ESV translation) causes confusion and discontent. It is saying that giving total freedom and no restraint allows and even encourages people to think there is no boundary. This sounds good in theory, but this scripture is clearly telling us that operating with no boundaries and restraint (following a vision or law) creates unhappiness. Giving vision and understanding and putting the boundaries in place gives everyone a sense of understanding and according to Proverbs, provides happiness. This does not necessarily translate to a church vision but a broader vision from God. Are the church and its people operating from God's vision and law? Have they made sure that is clear and the leadership is nesting any vision they have into that prophecy found in the Bible? Hybels tells us in his book, *Courageous Leadership*, that vision is what God will do if the people and the leadership get out of his way and let him have his way. It is the converse of what will happen if we turn people loose and let them have their way [ CITATION Bil09 \l 1033 ]. It is a warning against the latter.

As we move further into the passage in Proverbs, we see in verse 19-20 that the passage tells us servants (workers) cannot be corrected by mere words and that if someone speaks in haste, there is more hope than a fool for them. Those that work for or are part of a church cannot be sustained merely by a few words. There needs to be vision cast and explained. That cannot be done in haste because it is not infused with God's wisdom. It further tells us in verse 22 that an angry person stirs up conflict and commits many sins. This is telling us that either being the one without vision or the one trying to find the vision can cause sin in the frustration and anger that is caused by not having vision. The next verse tells us that pride brings a person low but the lowly in spirit gain honor. When the vision is not rooted in God's law and commands, it will cause a

person to take credit for it or not care whether God is in their vision. This causes people to work from human pride instead of humility to God's plan.

Verse 24 and 25 are giving us wisdom about thieves and how we can unwittingly or knowingly be an accomplice to that behavior. But we also show distrust to God when we are fearful of man and do not put our full trust in the Lord and keep it safe. We have to steward what God has given us well and be full of integrity at every level. We have to serve God over Man's objections or limitations.

The New Testament, not rooted in Torah law, still gives a clear picture of how God intended the church to function and what qualities had to be present to be successful in the governance and stewardship of his kingdom, all for the ultimate purpose of being ready for his return. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:11-15, that we are to encourage one another and hold up our leaders who are working to care for us in the Lord. We are to hold them in the highest regard, and it goes further to say that we should warn the disruptive but be patient with everyone. Strive to do what is right for each other and everyone else. This is telling us that our church leaders deserve to be prayed for and held up in high regard. If they are disruptive or wrong, we should tell them and warn of the consequences, but we are still told to love and be patient with them. We should accept admonishment from them if the Lord has called them, but we also have to lovingly care for each other even when leaders have done wrong. We still have a responsibility to them, and this is ultimately because of the end result we should all be focused on. Paul wrote to the churches to let them know that they had to get these things in order because the Eschatological implications were grave if they did not adhere to his words. The church was set to move everyone towards this ultimate goal of being ready for Christ's return but often churches set their vision and sights on worldly expectation or determination of success. We are to honor and care

for each other for the ultimate day of judgement and the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of our Lord. Gieschen talks about the mission of the church and that if this is not stressed, “many are left wondering what difference the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has made in this world [ CITATION Cha12 \l 1033 ].

### Historical Developments Paper

Our new generation of churches have taken on a much different flavor than the churches throughout history. This is the age of technology and entertainment is at an all- time high. The Catholic church has felt this significantly over the past few decades because of their adherence to centuries old liturgical practices that are not speaking to their young people today. It is an interesting problem. Do we look at vision in the church through the lens of the culture we are living in now or keep old tradition. The question is especially urgent to the Catholic church as they had a gathering of 14,000 Catholic teenagers in Kansas City, Mo., for the National Catholic Youth Conference. These young people proclaimed how much they want a new energizing experience of church, how much they want to gather on Sunday not just for a theologically correct repetition of ritual, but for a true celebration. They want to feel the presence of God, both in outstretched human hands and in symbolism that invites them to enter into the divine mystery. They yearn for music that stirs the soul and moves the body and for roles in the liturgy that involve them in meaningful ways [ CITATION Tho17 \l 1033 ]. What should the Catholic church do with this thought? Or when casting vision and figuring out how to disciple your membership, does this cultural perspective play into vision? Because we are trying to disciple and minister to the generation living today, I want to look at a church that started from nothing and has grown to be a major beacon to the people of today. How we minister to the people in the seats of our churches is so important and how do leaders cast vision to this highly educated,

highly mobile and highly cynical crowd. Kotter talks to us about why vision is so essential. He states that a good vision serves three purposes: clarifies general direction, motivates people to take action in the same direction and finally helps coordinate the actions of different people [ CITATION Joh12 \l 1033 ]. Vision must be part of a church (or any entity that is trying to meet any type of objective) and as I introduced in my problem set, our church is struggling with bringing our staff and board of Pastors all onto the same vision statement much less conveying that to the church in a way that provides clarity and cohesion. This is exacerbated by the leadership changes we have experienced as well. So, as I look at our situation, I am drawn to the Willow Creek model and what aspects of that church model are working and where they have had struggle. Any young group of leaders also has to analyze and look at their model from the background and expectations they bring in. Our church's median age is 35 so we are led by a young preacher trying to reach a crowd of young families and thirty somethings living and working in NYC. A look at how Willow Creek struggled and ultimately found a successful model for vision, unity and cohesion among staff and among church members is worth looking at.

Bill Hybels had a vision, hammered out by many years of church and other endeavors, that was set on reaching people who weren't accustomed to church and he was determined to figure out a way to reach them and this began in the 1970s and has morphed to what it is today. He partnered with a man who had different gifts than himself as he brought the business side into his vision as well as teaching and attempting to inspire and motivate, beginning with youth. This all seemed so exciting and exhilarating to him and his partner but turning that into something bigger would prove exceedingly difficult. He states and, I have seen, where we get caught up in the romance and excitement of the idea but actually putting it into practice becomes quite different.

Son City was Bill Hyble's first church endeavor and was hugely successful with the youth of that area as he cast vision and brought in the right people to serve that community, but he realized he couldn't just create an experience, he had to create disciples for the kingdom. He also realized that he now had to reach adults and would have to leave and venture away from Son City. He would start a new venture and he was told by many that it would not work. Trying to change church culture especially among adults is extremely challenging but he did start a new church and the struggles began. He had to work with unpaid staff (just as we are at our church also) and this can cause a certain amount of strife. People are helpful but their buy in for vision tends to be different since they are not being paid as well as their ownership of the goals may ebb and flow. He admits that even a stacked team will falter against the rigors of trying to change church culture and get people to work hard for a vision they did not necessarily hear from God but trust that you did. The Hybels had to deal with their fair share of criticism and vitriol from inside the staff as well as outsiders. This always makes you question vision as they did but they kept plugging towards what God was telling them to do. Their staff was drawn together in this new challenge, but they failed to appoint a senior pastor and the staff began to fall apart. No one was reporting to anyone and no one was coordinating anything. Even though everyone understood the vision in theory, everyone was working their own agendas. People were working harder; not smarter and personal lives were being negatively affected as well as the friendships that had started this church. From this painful experience, Bill Hybels now preaches at leadership conferences the importance of having a clear chain of command and defined staff structure and lines of authority. As he tried to implement this with his young staff, it began to splinter. Implementing after the fact was proving painful. He now had to clarify the spiritual direction of the church. The congregation largely remained unaware of the problems behind the scenes, the

staff was reeling, and the hurt was looming. Bill Hybels had to take drastic measures, admit failure, rework ideas and plans, and build a board of elders that could mitigate all the mistrust and dissension that was now occurring. As we know, the Willow Creek model is successful and has spawned numerous successful ministries but at the very beginning of their struggle, they had to realize that trying to wing it and not define roles and responsibilities was a recipe for disaster.

Lencioni lays out the six critical questions every church should ask, and the church needs to do this on the front end and not reactively to the mistakes it is making. Lencioni's questions are: Why do we exist? How do we behave? (figures into the theological implications of the next section), What do we do? How will we succeed? What is most important right now? And Who must do what? [ CITATION Pat12 \l 1033 ]. This template should be standard and mandatory for any church to be able to articulate. The Bible articulates this for us pretty clearly and yet somehow, the church can operate without answering any of these questions. That would seem to be at best irresponsible and at worst, reckless church leadership of God's kingdom.

### Theological Implications

Erickson lists forms of church government in his book on Christian Theology. There have been standardized forms of government throughout the history of the church and what ultimately led to denominations. He states as groups of believers become more permanent and formally constituted, the question of church government naturally arises. The issue of church government is the final analysis of where the authority will reside and who is to exercise it [ CITATION Mil131 \l 1033 ]. Even practical theology changes over time and varies across regions and can vary within a denomination as well as employing religious based (Biblical constructs) within the governance of the church overtly [ CITATION Joa11 \l 1033 ]. If a church is tightly bound to a

denominational construct, the idea of structure and job clarity as well as vision for the church may be easier to come by. It may be stringent and unable to be varied but it would be a known entity. All denominations tend to think their way is correct and define themselves as the church. Defining a specific church as “the church” ignores the Holy Spirit's capacity to move beyond boundaries and structures created by humans. But defining the church as authentically Christian individuals, wherever they are, reduces structural divisions to matters of indifference, when in reality they foster hostility among those who should be calling each other brother and sister. (Wilson 2014). Some denominations are hierarchical in nature, with local priests or pastors reporting to bishops and higher- level leaders who develop the doctrine and practice for the entire denomination (e.g., Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran). Other denominations, on the other hand, are congregational in nature and most decisions are made at the level of the local church [ CITATION FLC97 \l 1033 ]. In the problem statement I have laid out in this paper, the church in question is not attached to a denomination and therefore does not have a specific construct that it follows or any governing body with oversight. I do not think that is a problem in and of itself, but the theological implications can become something that needs to be addressed when the staff and congregation are not entirely sure what structure they are functioning in. The implications are many, but we will address two main implications of no vision and no staff clarity.

One of the most salient implications from a theological perspective when there is no vision is expecting people to freely give their tithes and offerings and trusting that there is vision and planning to how that money will be utilized for the kingdom. Planning and budgeting are not clearly addressed in the bible, but scripture talks to some of these issues. Proverbs 24:27 says to put your outdoor work in order and get your fields ready. After that, build your house. This scripture tells readers that you need to have plans and vision for how you will survive and even

though society today is not replete with farming analogies, basic needs are necessary and prioritization in the process is important. If the church is not stewarding money and planning correctly, they may be leading their congregation astray on how to live their lives. The church should be modeling life behavior from Biblical scripture in their practices as part of the teaching and shepherding of their congregation as well as making sure it is in place for the church. Every aspect of church governance should have an implication to the congregation it is serving and how it is teaching and informing the congregation's lives as well. The church at the center of this problem statement had two things in the financial realm that were a major source of dissension and had pastors and staff reeling from the clean up process. The administrator embezzled thousands of dollars and the congregation was never fully briefed on that number nor has it been made clear to this day. Some of that is due to long lawyer delays and forensic accounting processes but it has caused an underlier of distrust. Simultaneously, the former lead pastor unilaterally decided to provide funding to a Christian restaurant start up from an innovation fund the church had in reserve. This money was meant to help businesses, but no one was informed through the normal process and once word leaked out, it was a disastrous time for the church and their leadership. People felt like their money was being mishandled and if the church will do that, they will do anything. This type of action can have huge theological implications as people begin to see the "church" living separately from the Bible and begin to lose faith in both. Money and finances are an emotional topic in church and often one of the main reasons people leave or distrust the church at large.

The second theological implication of not providing vision and clarity to the staff and people of the church is the dissension that will surely follow. Romans 14:18 tells the reader that if you let Christ be the Lord in all affairs, God will be glad and so will others. In this way, aim for

harmony in the church and try to build each other up. This shows that the theological implications of not building each other up and aiming for harmony can cause great damage to God's work within his people. Every time there is dissension in the church, the Bible addresses it from a standpoint of turning back to God and adhering to his rules and structures. God tells us in Proverbs that without vision there is death. This is death in the sense of killing the intention God had for his church and the work he wants done through his people. It is not just a lack of clearly relaying a vision, it is the bigger implication of confusing God's people as well as causing them to look inward at what is not going correctly with church leadership instead of focusing on what work God might have for the church to accomplish and each individual's role in it. Dissension causes focus and discussion to be on things that God never intended. Disagreement and healthy discussion are an important part of the church but when roles are not defined and the church isn't clear on their purpose, that healthy discussion turns to dissension and silence or even worse, spreading gossip and vitriol. No church has ever been immune to these problems, but lack of formal structure can make those problems much more dangerous to the church and to the shepherding of God's people. When our church leadership started discussing operating from a more Pentecostal bent, the congregation was reeling. They no longer trusted the place they chose to worship and could not understand the abrupt change. Why was the church suddenly saying and doing things it had never done before or beginning to operate a church service with no real structure? These new applications went over like a sack of coal. No one understood and no one was getting a straight answer from anyone. Since the former lead pastor left, the church has been slowly climbing back to a place of equilibrium. The issue is that so many people left the church and continue to work against the church and its people. This is an issue for their souls for sure and the church has a part in that. Because of the dishonesty, lack of vision and general chaos that

ensued, people left confused and not being shepherded. This lack of shepherding by strong church leadership has turned these people out into the streets unguided and unable to find their place with God and the long-term effect of their lives and souls being in limbo in some cases. It is more dramatic than people simply leaving the church, it has soul consequences and the church should never be the cause of that. If the church is a barrier to people finding Jesus, we have failed in catastrophic ways. Wayne Grudem tells us in his systematic theology teachings that “I am convinced that there is an urgent need in the church today for much greater understanding of Christian doctrine, or systematic theology. Not only pastors and teachers need to understand theology in greater depth -- the WHOLE CHURCH does as well. One day by God's grace we may have churches full of Christians who can discuss, apply and LIVE the doctrinal teachings of the Bible as readily as they can discuss the details of their own jobs or hobbies - or the fortunes of their favorite sports team or television program.” [ CITATION Way95 \l 1033 ]. What does this entail and how would a church and pastor set a vision for this? That is a question that must be asked in our churches and what we as leaders should want for our congregations.

### Practical Applications

My research and findings during the course of this paper have given me a few convictions. One is that a church must have a vision, it is reckless to not have one in place. I now have the Biblical backing to be able to have that conversation with my board of pastors from a place of asking us to look together at what that means for our church. I want to bring solutions to the table and not just present a problem so talking to them about what a vision might look like in our current construct can generate conversation and momentum. The other main take away for our church is that staff structure has to be codified and laid out clearly, so everyone knows what is expected and how to nest their job functions into the overall vision. This kind of clarity will

translate into the congregation and what they are expecting and need from the church leadership. Once it is codified within the staff, it can be clearly conveyed to the church with buy in from the staff and pastors. As a vision is being conveyed, there will be much more power behind it if the staff already is moving into it and can talk to their ministry about how it will look to them. I see the staff as the lynchpin in both aspects here. Giving them clear expectations and vision to infuse into their individual ministry work will be a game changer for the congregation beginning to see a clear, unified structure in place.

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