

## Lesson 17

### CHANGE AND CONFLICT WHILE LEADING

“Anyone seriously interested in planned social change would be well advised to recognize two facts of life. First, despite the claims of many, relatively little is known about how to achieve predictable change. Second, much of what is known will not work” (Lyle E. Schaller, *The Change Agent*).

### HOW TO EFFECT CHANGE

#### I. Find The Right Leader

- A. He must be a change agent.
- B. He must be secure in Christ, like himself and be authentic.
- C. He must know his spiritual gifts, be acquainted with his temperament, grasp his natural abilities and talents and have a passion for the ministry of change.
- D. He must be a leader with qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9).

#### II. The Qualifications For A Change Agent

- A. He must be willing to initiate change (lightening rod).
- B. He must create dissatisfaction with the status quo.
- C. He must envision what needs to be done, even though it seems to be humanly impossible – gift of faith.
- D. He must be willing to front and admonish others – gift of exhortation.
- E. He must know how to uplift the discouraged and calm the hypersensitive people – gift of mercy.
- F. He must be a clear communicator – gift of preaching.
- G. He must have a desire to see lost people come to Christ – gift of evangelism.
- H. He must be able to set goals, plan budgets and create an organizational structure – gift of administration.
- I. He must have a passion for change being a risk taker and one who knows how to persevere in difficulty.
- J. He must be a catalyst, a problem solver, a visionary, a motivator, a persuader, an empathizer, a planner, a recruiter, an organizer and a delegator.

#### III. Understanding Why People Resist Change

- A. Most people resist change because they feel no need for change or they fear the unknown.
- B. Discover people’s felt needs in order to uncover their true needs.
- C. To help people discover true need, moving them out of their comfort zones, is emotionally painful for the people and for the change agent.
- D. A churches’ values must be changed before changing programs.
- E. Traditionalists resist change because they have vested time, talents, energy and money into the established institution.
- F. Change for a church means somebody is going to lose power or influence.

- G. Those who resist change must take ownership of the change if the change is to be genuine and lasting.
- H. People must trust the leader (change agent) for change to take place.
- I. People resist change because they feel a stress overload – they sense everything is changing and can't handle any more change.
- J. The church that fails to change fails to impact the culture that is constantly changing.
- K. There is three ways to prevent stress overload: 1) communication; 2) assurances; 3) encourage participation.
- L. Christians in established churches need to make a clear distinction between function (unchanging, eternal principles) and form (things that can always change).

#### IV. **Understanding Those Who Resist Change**

- A. Early adopters. These are innovators who are pioneers for change (8-18%). They are frustrated with the status quo and are willing to try anything that promises change.
- B. Middle Adopters. They can go either way on change but must be presented with the evidence and rationale for change (60-80%). They do not actively pursue change nor do they automatically reject it. They will not change if they do not trust their leaders.
- C. Late Adopters. They are very skeptical of anything new or innovative, but in time they will go along with the new idea. They fall line line with the majority (18%).
- D. Never Adopters. They resist all change whatever it is or how well it is presented or desperately needed (2-20%). They usually are persistent, negative, vocal and obstinate, and may be divisive and attempt to split the church. They are quick to call for the removal of the pastor.

#### V. **Understanding Those Who Effect Change**

- A. The major groups to effect change are the church board, staff, board of trustees, Christian Education committee, Missions Committee, etc.
- B. Other groups are Sunday school teachers, growth groups, youth groups, choir, etc.
- C. The final and most important group is the congregation.
- D. Always deal with the church board through the chairman. If you deal personally with other board members than deal with all board members, or you will be accused of showing favoritism or politicking. Try to work with the whole board as much as possible.
- E. All staff should support the vision and plan. If some do not, they should resign or be asked to resign.
- F. Great patience must be exercised with people. The leader or leaders cannot expect the congregation to accept in one hour what the leaders have been wrestling with for a year.
- G. The key to reach all groups is communication and the ability to listen. Sometimes people just need to talk out their frustrations.
- H. In effecting change, sometimes there might be harsh words, insinuations and even accusations towards the change agent. Facing painful opposition is part of the job description for a change agent.

#### VI. **Understanding The Time For Change**

- A. Every church has a life cycle of birth, growth, decline and eventually death.
- B. Most churches begin to decline around the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> year.
- C. Things which make change possible are: 1) a crisis like there are only senior citizens and no youth in the church, decline in attendance, resignation of a pastor, a

natural disaster like a fire, a church split, obsolete facility, etc.; 2) removal of a pastor; 3) planting a new church; 4) renewal of a pastor; 5) renewal of lay leadership; 6) expertise of a church consultant; 7) denominational assistance; 8) a revival.

- D. For a dying church, change must be made quickly (best in the honeymoon period). For a church in a plateau, change should not take place for at least four months. Churches in a plateau must make the change within two years or else it will take over five years.
- E. If nothing works to bring change, the church should shut its doors. But this is the last resort.

## VII. Understanding The Change Process

- A. Unfreeze The Present Situation. The change agent creates discontent with the status quo. He takes advantage of crisis, creates a crisis by warnings of impending disaster, calls attention to the churches' image in the community, reminds the people of the "better days," points out things which would be in the best interest of the church, etc.
- B. Move To A New Level. The congregation must not only become dissatisfied with "what is" but must crave "what could be." A change agent casts a powerful vision, showing the exciting possibilities of the future. A change agent has developed a well thought out plan that shows how the vision will be accomplished. The plan includes goals and objectives to reaching those goals. The change agent recruits a team to articulate the vision and plan and to aid in the implementation of the dream
- C. Refreeze The New Level. Do not let the congregation return to the old level if a few minor things do not go well. The change agent must be constantly re-evaluating all the programs of the church in light of the vision, making changes when necessary.

## VIII. Understanding the Tools for Change

- A. Prayer
- B. Faith
- C. Questions. Ask key questions and allow people to ask questions no matter how trite they may seem. The people must take ownership of the plan.
- D. Terminology. Try to use words other than "change." Nouns: alterations, diversification, modification, innovation, variation. Verbs: alter, vary, temper, diversify, modify, transform recast, revamp, reorganize.
- E. Communications. The change agent must listen well, communicate effectively, put down rumors, give regular progress reports, leaks information and communicates positively.
- F. Committee For Change. The change agent may want to create an ad hoc committee for change. All grievances are brought to this committee.
- G. Accepting The Consequences Of Change. Change comes by addition of new people, subtraction of hindering people and replacement of people who are not in line with the plan.

## IX. Understanding Levels Of Change

- A. Compliance. This is forced, surface change and will go back when the dominant force is removed.
- B. Identification. This is identifying peoples' needs and using positive models. This is better change than compliance but the excitement may wear off in time.
- C. Internalization. People want to change and own the change. This is real change and is most lasting and takes the longest time to effect.

- X. Understanding The Logical Steps To Effect Change**
- A. A leader must be found with proper spiritual gifts, natural liabilities and the right temperament to be a change agent.
  - B. A leader must seek God's wisdom and will for a vision and plan, asking God if the vision and plan is right for the congregation he wants to change.
  - C. The leader must have a clear vision and plan for what he wants to do with the congregation he wants to change and be personally committed to the process of change.
  - D. The leader must communicate his plan to the proper groups within the congregation – ruling board, trustees, Christian Education, Missions, etc. The leader always goes to the key groups within the church before going to the congregation.
  - E. The leader must not accept initial rejection of his vision and plan as final. It takes time for others to accept the plan.
  - F. The leader lays low for a short while upon initial rejection but comes back to the plan several times if necessary, approaching it from several different angles.
  - G. The leader puts around him people who are sympathetic to his vision and plan. They may be an ad hoc committee or a loose knit group to whom he goes for consultation.
  - H. The leader must permit other leaders and lay people to interact with the vision and plan so everyone gains ownership of the change.
  - I. The leader will give adequate time for the vision and plan to sink into the heads and hearts of the lay people long after the essential leaders are on board with the plan.
  - J. The leader, before implementing the vision and plan, will have a season of prayer at every level of the church.
  - K. The leader, with support of the ruling board, will implement the plan with excitement and enthusiasm.
  - L. The leader will not get overly disturbed or discouraged if a few people never adopt the vision and plan. They will cause internal struggle, seek to remove the pastor or leave the church.
  - M. The leader makes sure there is some plan set in place for evaluation of the on-going plan to determine if it needs modification or scrapping.
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