



Leading the Journey

An E-newsletter on EXCELLENCE in Leadership

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Christian Leadership

Ed Boyatt

What is central to Christianity should be central to a Christian model of leadership. Jesus and Paul are most clear in describing the core concepts of God's Kingdom. Jesus says love for God and people are prominent in His kingdom (Mat. 22:37-40). On another occasion, Jesus states his "most important" principles are justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matt. 23:23). Paul added that he believes the essence of Christianity is love, faith, and hope (1 Cor. 13:13).

My model of leadership is based on the principles central to Christianity – love, faith, justice, and hope. Love and justice set the agenda on what needs to be accomplished. Love and faith describe the methodology in the change process. And hope keeps leaders optimistically thinking about the future and the power of vision to determine the future.

Leadership starts with love for God and love for people. A Christian leader has a deep respect and admiration for God and the wisdom of His ways. This is translated into an unconditional acceptance of people, while working to meet their basic needs and the mission of the school. Love is an action, which improves the well-being of others. That is why leaders are passionate about the professional and personal development of themselves and of those they serve.

Secondly, leaders seek justice for all. Integrity and fairness occupies the hearts and minds of leaders. They deeply believe all people are valuable in that their well-being drives the mission of administrators. Since leadership is a process of change, justice for the well-being of those they serve sets the agenda for change. Leaders in schools continually study those students who are underserved and seek to correct that wrong or injustice.

Thirdly, faith and trust is the glue that ties people together. Only leaders of integrity and character can be trustworthy. The foundation of leadership begins with healthy relationships with those whom they collaborate.

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Emerging Diversity

Vern Biloff

Principals and superintendents who work in the Seventh-day Adventist school system are experiencing a rapidly changing landscape. Our schools are adversely affected by the ever-escalating issue of philosophical differences. Conference administrators, local school boards, pastors, and parents are becoming more and more divergent in their world views, staking out adversarial positions. Like it or not, Seventh-day Adventism is in a process of change. School administrators no longer have the luxury of serving within the ranks of a homogeneous church constituency. This philosophical and theological diversity presents an unprecedented challenge to the promotion, governance, and overall well being of its school system.

As church administrators diligently recruit conference leaders, pastors, and school administrators to mirror their personal philosophies, our school system becomes more and more polarized. Principals endeavoring to meet the varied needs of a diverse and divided school and church constituency find themselves on the cusp of a dilemma: which of the stakeholder groups demand my allegiance? As a result, enrollments are declining, work environments are tense and coping with this escalating change is becoming a principal's nightmare. School administrators who fail to meet this growing challenge, may find themselves facing school closures.

In order to successfully deal with this growing change, principals must:

1. Sensitize themselves and empower their teachers to face this new reality
2. Major in school excellence — a force of strength during a time of uncertainty
3. Emphasize Seventh-day Adventist Christian principles rather than ideology
4. Build team unity through shared competence and mutual trust

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Lastly, hope is what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders. Leaders are hopeful, optimistic, and energetic. Their enthusiasm leaves no room for pessimism. They are engaged and excited about building a better future. They have a sense of direction; they are forward-looking.

Jesus demonstrated love, faith, justice, and hope in meeting his mission. These qualities are central to a Christian model of leadership that finds compassionate service as essential to successful improvements in our schools and community. I have offered just a brief outline of each quality. In later newsletters, I will provide practical examples for each of these concepts because they are nonnegotiable in the Journey to Excellence. ☸

What We're Reading

Ed Boyatt

There are dozens of books that attempt to analyze the life and teachings of Jesus on leadership. I choose *Jesus on Leadership: Discovering the secrets of servant leadership* (1998) by Gene Wilkes, as the best one for a number of reasons. As a former university professor in the subject of leadership from a Christian perspective, I appreciate the author's grasp of current leadership theory and research. I like a theologian who is current in leadership research and can write clearly on why the principles of Jesus best meet the needs of today's leaders.

Wilkes outlines principles to lead as Jesus led. Here are a few of his statements to whet your appetite. "Jesus humbled himself and allowed God to exalt him." "Jesus defined greatness as being a servant." "Jesus shared responsibility and authority with those he called to lead."

Leadership authors such as Robert Greenleaf, Peter Block, Stephen Covey, Max DePree, and Laurie Beth Jones are referenced by Wilkes. They have all made the importance of service and character more viable in the marketplace of ideas, which dominate current leadership literature.

You will be inspired and challenged when you study this book on servant leadership. It is rich with scriptures and references to current leadership studies that verify the principles of the leadership style of Jesus. Leaders will want to include this book in both their devotional and professional reading. ☸

5. Build trusting relationships with school constituent pastors and stakeholders through social interaction and fellowship

As North American Adventism struggles over its future identity, its school system must remain a viable alternative for Adventist families. Principals and supporting school boards must seek ways to meet the challenge of educating the church's children in an atmosphere of both progressive and conservative thinking. Time is slipping away. We can meet this challenge. ☸

Research to Results

Ed Boyatt

Robert Marzano and his research team validated the competencies essential for a school principal to enhance student achievement. This was accomplished through a meta-analysis of quantitative research studies published in the last 35 years. A meta-analysis synthesizes a vast amount of research that allows one to propose generalizations that are statistically based.

Samplings of the 21 competencies successful principals learn and demonstrate are:

Visibility – has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students

Resources – provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs

Optimizer – inspires and leads new and challenging innovations

Focus – establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention

Culture – fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation

Curriculum & Instruction – is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices

Change Agent – actively challenges the status quo

I refer leaders to *School Leadership the Works* (2005) by Robert Marzano for a full list of the 21 responsibilities. These competencies are not new to the body of published research, but these actions of school leaders are now substantiated by research. And Adventist leaders seek research based information. ☸

Berit von Pohle

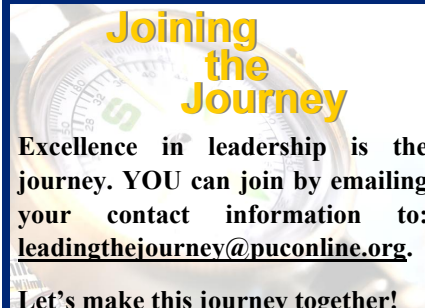
The primary roles of a school board are to address the questions "what", "how", and "how well" – and then to "sell". How does the board approach the question of "what"?

The board, with input from administration, must determine the vision and mission of the school. This is done within the context of the philosophy and goals for Seventh-day Adventist education as developed by the North American Division. The board will then add a local component to clarify the vision and mission of their particular school.

Sometimes the board and administration unintentionally change the mission of the school by their practices. For example, a school with the mission to serve the needs of the local Seventh-day Adventist students may choose to accept a larger number of non-Seventh-day Adventist students, or recruit a large number of international students. Neither of these is an issue as long as the practices fit the mission of the school – or if the mission of the school is intentionally changed to promote the practices.

The "what" may also be determined through the development of a strategic plan or through the recommendations made by an accreditation visiting team. Combining these recommendations and the action plans developed by the school provide direction for "what" is going to happen on campus.

Determining what the school is going to be and do is the starting point for any school board. ☸



Joining the Journey

Excellence in leadership is the journey. YOU can join by emailing your contact information to: leadingthejourney@puconline.org.

Let's make this journey together!