THE NECESSITY OF GOOD COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP IN THE MISSIONAL CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to address the necessity of good communication and leadership in the Missional Church. Everyone talks about it, few understand it. Most people want it: few achieve it.[1] Due to John Maxwell word above, this article is based on these two assumptions: First, God will continue to proclaim his kingdom to the world through the vehicle of the church. Second, it is assumed that God will continue to call and work though leaders as catalysts to accomplish his agenda. The purpose of this article is to study key communication factors that is needed for the Church. The article demonstrate that the Missional Church has been and will continue to be God's primary tool for proclaiming his kingdom to the world with the ultimate purpose being to "reconcile to himself all things".

Keywords: Missional, Missional Church, Communication, Leadership, Teacher

1.0 INTRODUCTION

After Peter had identified Jesus as the Son of God, Jesus said to him and the rest of the disciples, "...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). Because the church is the body of Christ with Christ as its head, it is justifiable to agree with Hybels when he writes, "the local church is the hope of the world" (Col 1:18), (Stetzer and Travis 2007:6)[2]. Prior to the church age, God brought leaders for the Israelites such as Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David, and Solomon who served God's chosen people during critical points of their history. He

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[1] John Maxwell, Developing the Leader Within You *(Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993),* 1

[2] Ed Stetzer and Dave Travis, "Who Starts New Churches?" Leadership Network, 2007, *www.leadnet.org/papers (August 9, 2013), pg.*6

also provided prophets such as Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, who brought revelation to the people during their wandering, confusion, and exile. Much of Old Testament history involves God guiding his people through the courageous actions and prophetic words of those he had set aside to lead. In fact, Proverbs 29:18 identifies a dire outcome for those to whom no voice is heard: "Where there is no prophetic vision, the people cast off restraint" (Prov 29:18). The prophet Joel writes, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28). God has been and will continue to be active in revealing his plans through people who in turn proclaim the message to others.

2.0 COMMUNICATION DEFINED

Communication can be defined as the activity or process of experiencing ideas and feeling or of giving people information. It is also a method of sending information, especially telephone, radio, computer, etc or roads and railways (Hornby 2010:260). In the same vein, Webster Dictionary defines communication as "a sending, giving, or exchanging of information, ideas, etc. It also explains it as "a method of such exchange."[3] Thus, Sowale summarizes communication into the following outlines; that communication implies and envisages more than one person to be complete, that is, it involves more than one person to act; there must exist an idea, a concept or circumstance which must pass from one to the other, at least knowledge of what is to be transmitted and the language that could be understood by the receiver without which there is indeed no affective communication; and the message being communicated must be understood, digested and interpreted by the receiver.[4]

In the New Testament, God again appears to work in and through leaders to build his church. Peter is one example of this. Malphurs (2013:35) states that "Peter's name appears in the book of Acts no less than fifty-seven times in chapters 1-5, 8-12, and 15, while the other apostles are mentioned only twenty-five times." When God wanted the gospel to expand beyond the Jews, it was Peter to whom he gave the vision of unclean animals in Acts 10. That revelation was a defining moment in convincing the Jerusalem church that salvation was available to the Gentiles as well. Thus, the church received yet another compelling reason to embrace the entirety of the Great Commission

John Maxwell is famous for his statement that, "everything rises and falls on leadership" (Maxwell 2007:293). An essential element of effective pastoral leadership is the casting of vision. Vision arises from a burden that the leader carries to see a different outcome than what

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[3] Webster Dictionary as cited in Sowale, S. O. 2011. *A Handbook for Church Administration. (*Ilesa: Fatiregun Printing Press). 88.
[4] Ibid. p. 89.

otherwise would be. When it is done effectively, vision casting can inspire people to think and behave radically different than they have in the past. As said by Sumner Wemp, good leadership, whether in business, politics, or Churches, is lacking in our society. There is great need for good leadership. He said the difference between mediocrity and greatness is vision (Wemp 1982:62). A leader has to know where he is going so the Church needs God's men with God's vision for the world.

In order to study key communication factors that is needed for the Church, we must make a distinction between vision and vision casting. It is critical to look at the literature as it relates to the understanding of the concept of vision in an environment of spiritual leadership. Any position of leadership involves a considerable amount of correspondence, and letters are self-revealing. Take Paul, for example. We know more about his moral integrity, intellectual honesty, and spiritual life from his letters than from any other source (Sanders 1994:75). Much has been written on the subject of vision over the years. So much so that one writer suggested in a popular pastoral leadership publication as far back as 1994 that, the subject of vision can become as dry as Ezekiel's old bones" (Goetz 1994:36). Mancini (2008:229-320) suggests, however, that vision must be "redeemed," and what it means to be a visionary must be discovered anew.

In his seminal book on church planting, Malphurs (1998:264) offers this definition of vision: "a clear, challenging picture of the future of your ministry as it can and must be" Barna (1992:5) defines it this way: "Vision for ministry is a clear, mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances"[5] While these definitions have represented the "industry standard" for years, they have not been without criticism. Mancini is critical of vision being defined merely as a written document that becomes either a "compelling page dump" or a "lofty one liner"[6] His concern is that this common expression of vision is incomplete. Instead, he defines it this way: "Vision Proper is the living language that anticipates and illustrates God's better immediate future."[7]

Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:145) write in The Missional Leader that in these changing times leaders cannot expect that having "the right vision and enough energy" will inspire people to

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[5] *An example of this is Rick Warren's written vision statement that he was able to powerfully utilize in the sermon he preached on the opening Sunday of Saddleback Church in 1980. It can be found at: Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 43.*

[6] *Mancini, Church Unique, Chapter 16, Location 2079-83, 2089-94.*

[7] *Ibid., Location 2108-11.*

follow. They argue that vision as an idea in the leader's mind followed by subsequent plans and programs that flow out of that vision is not effective in this time of discontinuous change."[8] Because of this scenario, the authors believe that leaders are able to provide neither a definition nor a determination of the future.[9]

Rather, vision is substituted by "missioner imagination" where the leader seeks to build trust through authenticity, and then addresses the spiritual needs of the particular community to be reached.[10] This idea is similar to the discussion of vision found in Blackaby and Blackaby (2001:66; Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006:145) Spiritual Leadership. The authors of both books warn against vision that is merely the desire to implement programs and ministries into a church without careful discernment of God's desires within a particular ministry context. However, while Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:145) appear skeptical of a leader's ability to clearly determine God's desires for the future, Blackaby and Blackaby (2001:71) would argue that as a leader walks closely with God, that leader is able to be "keenly aware of his revelation." When arriving at a definition of vision for the purposes of this article, the material in Spiritual Leadership is informative because of its careful distinction between secular and spiritual leadership. For example, the authors prefer the word revelation to vision when defining what the spiritual leader in particular needs in order to move people forward (Blackaby and Blackaby 2001:69).[11] The King James Version translates Proverbs 29:18 as follows: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov 29:18 KJV). The authors, however, argue that the New International Version offers a superior translation: "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint" (Prov 29:18 NIV). The key distinction, again, is in the usage of the word revelation as opposed to vision. Suggesting that a conventional understanding of vision for the spiritual leader is too often rooted in secular concepts and understanding, the author's note, "God does not

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[8] *Ibid... The authors contrast "discontinuous change" from "continuous change" this way: continuous change "develops out of what has gone before and therefore can be expected, anticipated and managed." Discontinuous change refers to periods in history that "transform a culture forever, tipping it over into something new." 6*

[9] *Ibid. It should be noted that the authors do not provide an alternative definition to vision per se, but rather challenge the effectiveness of its modernist understanding. Still, their concern holds merit and is taken into consideration in forming a definition of vision for this project.p.145*

[10] *Ibid., 131, 139, 143-147*

[11] *It should be noted that the authors retain the word "vision" throughout the remainder of the book, albeit with this caveat relating to the origination of vision as being from God for the Christian leader.*

ask his followers to operate by vision. God's people live by revelation...Vision is something people produce; revelation is something people receive."[12]

Specifying the term by aligning it more closely with revelation, Blackaby and Blackaby (2001:69) define vision as "what God has revealed and promised about the future." This seems to capture the unique task of the Christian leader seeking to lead people into the will of God, distinguishing it from other secular organizations that might look elsewhere for wisdom and inspiration. McIntosh (2003:102) calls the work of discerning vision as "pathfinding," and describes it as the "central responsibility of leadership." Rather than being just a bright idea, McIntosh argues that pathfinding starts with being "on the path that the Chief Shepherd has revealed."[13]

2.1 Leadership Defined

Sanders opined that "the greater military leader Bernard Montgomery spoke of leadership in these terms: 'leadership is the capacity which inspires confidence.' An outstanding example of this statement was Sir Winston Churchill, Leader of Britain during World War II." Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others to follow his or her lead. Famous leader has always known this. Fleet Admiral Nimitz said: "Leadership may be defined as that quality that inspires sufficient confidence in subordinates as to be willing to accept his views and carry out his commands" (Sanders 1994:28).

Jesus define leadership as service, and that applies whether a leader works in a secular or a church organization. Field Marshal Montgomery said that his war experience taught him that the staff must be the servant of the troops and that a good staff officer must serve his commander while remaining anonymous himself (Sanders 1994:125). Missionary leadership must be ready to delegate responsibility to nationals the moment they give evidence of spiritual maturity. Then the missionary must stand by them, ready to help but reluctant to intervene, guiding the national through trial and error so that he or she might learn spiritual leadership as the missionary did. Leadership is the ability to inspire others to action. Leadership radiate confidence, ability, control, and vision. Those with leadership have the ability to attract and inspire others, and to motivate mass human effort toward a common goal. A leader also has the ability to read people, determine their strengths and weaknesses, and then place them in the exact organizational position to best use those strengths.

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[12] *Ibid., p.69*

[13] *Ibid.*

3.0 THE VISION CONCEPT IN SCRIPTURE

The word "revelation" can be problematic, however, because one could assume that the divine communication received might be held in the same regard as Scripture. Yet the canon is closed, and the book of Revelation offers a strict warning to any who would attempt to "add" or "take away" from God's revealed word (Rev 22:18-19), (Grudem 1994:64-65). However, the material above appears to be consistent with Scripture. For example, the Hebrew word "וחֹזֶה" in Proverbs 29:18 means "divine communication in a vision, oracle, or prophecy" (Brown, Driver and Briggs 2000:303). This same word is found in other Old Testament passages, such as 1 Samuel 3:1; 1 Chronicles 17:15; Habakkuk 2:2,3; Ezekiel 7:13 (Brown, Driver and Briggs 2000:303). The word means more than simply a perception of an idea. In fact, in each one of these cases the vision was brought about by supernatural revelation from God.

A survey of the word vision as used in the New Testament again links the concept to divine communication from God. Hellenistic thought placed a high value on seeing. In the Greek world, the ability to see was linked to intellectual perception. In fact, Greek religion itself has been called "religion of vision," and was in this context that the New Testament and the Septuagint were written (Gerhard and Gerhard 1999:319). While there are a diverse number of Greek words that are translated vision or seeing in the New Testament and the Septuagint, many of them come from variations of the words "'οραω" and "ειδον"[14] Both words carry the definition of perception, especially in a spiritual sense.[15]

The definition of vision we are concerned with is that which relates to leadership and direction. Therefore, while both Greek terms above might carry a broad range of meaning, such as physically seeing something miraculous (e.g., a theophany), the concept of vision as presented in Scripture can be narrowed to the idea of receiving by divine counsel that which is right about a certain situation. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament draws the distinction this way: Paul, though capable of ecstatic experiences, does not seem to have had visions after the manner of (the book of Revelation). If to clear up detailed eschatological questions he appeals to special revelations, his reference is to the words of the exalted Lord (1 Thes. 4:15) or to disclosed μυστήρια (1 Cor. 15:51). That is to say, he always has in view revelation by word, which can include theological intuition.[16]

4.0 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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[14] *Ibid., p.342.*

[15] *Ibid., 325. In the Septuagint, "'οραω and ειδον are often used for spiritual perception."*

[16] *Ibid., p.352*

The literature in the area transformational leadership supports this understanding of vision beginning with the leader. Transformational leadership can be defined as "a leadership style that involves generating a vision for the organization and inspiring followers to meet the challenges that it sets."[17] This kind of leadership has to do with the opportunity to "shape and alter and elevate the motives and values and goals of followers through the vital teaching role of leadership" (Burns 1978:425). This is in contrast to transactional leadership, which is characterized by the "promise and reward for good performance, or threat and discipline for poor performance" (Bass 1990:20). Transformational Leadership is broken down into four categories, known as the 4 "I's": They are

- **Idealized Influence (II)** - the leader serves as an ideal role model for followers; the leader "walks the talk," and is admired for this.
- **Inspirational Motivation (IM)** - Transformational leaders have the ability to inspire and motivate followers. Combined, these first two I's are what constitute the transformational leader's charisma.
- **Individualized Consideration (IC)** - Transformational leaders demonstrate genuine concern for the needs and feelings of followers. This personal attention to each follower is a key element in bringing out their very best efforts.
- **Intellectual Stimulation (IS)** - the leader challenges followers to be innovative and creative. A common misunderstanding is that transformational leaders are "soft," but the truth is that they constantly challenge followers to higher levels of performance (Avolio and Bass 1993:3).

Bass and Avolio (1993:45) see communication of vision as a critical aspect of transformational leadership. The transformational leader communicates in such a way as to inspire others to share in the vision. This is done not only verbally but also in the "actions and behaviors" used by the leader. One of the tools of transformational leadership is charisma. Bass says that "charisma" in the eyes of one's employees is central to succeeding as a transformational leader (Bass 1990:21). Herrington, Bonem, and Furr (2000:10) build on transformational leadership principles in forming the third part of their "congregational transformation model." Interestingly, they distinguish the church from business organizations in that "the spiritual health of the pastor and other key leaders is intimately intertwined with that of the congregation" (Herrington, Bonem, and Furr 2000:159). Citing the need for "service and risk," they urge pastors to provide a model for others to follow (Herrington, Bonem, and Furr 2000:97). This would be consistent with the inspirational motivation concept offered by Bass and Avolio. Strock comments on the evolution of the transformational leadership paradigm in the Information Age: Gandhi and other historic

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[17] *"transformational leadership," A Dictionary of Business and Management, 2006, Encyclopedia.com (July 30, 2013).*

leaders who challenged great institutions could achieve significant power based on their moral authority. If such authority was conferred by those "below," it would have power because it was consistent with the values of those "above."

4.1 Leaders as Communicators/teachers

It is not surprising to me that some of the great leaders have been men who are also significant teachers. According to 1 Timothy 3:2 anyone who aspires to the office of overseer in the church should be able to teach. What is a good teacher or communicator? I think a good teacher/communicator has at least the following characteristics.

➤ A good teacher/communicator asks himself the hardest questions, works through to answers, and then frames provocative questions for his learners to stimulate their thinking.

➤ A good teacher/communicator analyzes his subject matter into parts and sees relationships and discovers the unity of the whole.

➤ A good teacher/communicator knows the problems learners will have with his subject matter and encourages them and gets them over the humps of discouragement.

➤ A good teacher/communicator foresees objections and thinks them through so that he can answer them intelligently.

➤ A good teacher/communicator can put himself in the place of a variety of learners and therefore explain hard things in terms that are clear from their standpoint.

➤ A good teacher/communicator is concrete, not abstract, specific, not general, precise, not vague, vulnerable, not evasive.

➤ A good teacher/communicator always asks, "So what?" and tries to see how discoveries shape our whole system of thought. He tries to relate discoveries to life and tries to avoid compartmentalizing. The goal of a good teacher is the transformation of all of life and thought into a Christ-honoring unity.

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Step	Audience & Goals	Key Communications
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#2 INFORM	**Visitors & casual attenders** Learn more about your church and the Christian faith Connect with the church Personal Salvation	**Digital & Print Versions** Bulletins & Bulletin Inserts Connection & Prayer cards Doctrinal & Denominational information Church Overviews; Overall Church Newsletters Websites, emails, social media, video, podcasts
#3 INCLUDE	**Attenders and new believers** Become church members Participate in activities outside Sunday or main service Become involved in ministries and small groups	**Digital & Print Versions** Age, life-stage program info & PR: children, youth, singles, men's, women's, seniors, etc. Ministry specific newsletters, brochures, calendars, event info, and PR Websites, emails, social media, video, podcasts
#4 INSTRUCT	**Believers in Jesus** Learn God's Word and the basic doctrines of the Christian faith Participate in corporate training and private study Become mature believers, able to defend and share their faith	**Digital & Print Versions** Training materials for all ages and life-stages, both group and individual Teacher's training, manuals, and support Corporate devotionals, Bible reading materials, inspirational reminders Websites, emails, social media, video, podcasts
#5 INSPIRE	**Maturing disciples** Integrate their faith into all of life, shown by character, witness, giving, and service to the local church, community, and missions	**Digital & Print Versions** Continued discipleship training Volunteer recruitment, training, affirmation Financial communications Missions information and challenges Websites, emails, social media, video, podcasts

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4.2 How Then Shall We Lead?

Leadership principles do flow from the pages of Scripture, but what shall we do in light of these biblical principles? Perhaps the first step is simply to work at creating an environment – a climate – in our churches in which biblical leadership styles can blossom and thrive. This would be a climate of:

- Respect, focusing on individual worth and dignity, and encouraging people to contribute their Ideas.
- Trust, in which people learn to trust their own abilities and those of others, unthreatened by constant changes in policy and program.
- Acceptance, where, within appropriate boundaries, people have room to think and move to consider changes in their own belief systems and more important in methods of ministry.
- Discovery, which recognize that new leaders will make mistakes, that alternative solutions need to be explored without the pressures of immediate answers but with tolerance for ambiguity in the midst of tough problems.
- Depth, a depth of spiritual dimensions in individual and corporate leaders and also depth "on the bench" (Gangel 1989:155-169).

5.0 CONCLUSION

If the people in the pew must work to understand the preacher, he himself must labour to understand the writer of the Bible. Communication means "a meeting of meanings," and for communication to occur across an auditorium or across the centuries, those involved must share things in common – language, culture, a world view and communication forms (Robinson 2001:23). Communication is needed in the Church to communicate faith to the body of Christ and we should use our leadership potential in doing this. Leaders must learn to first communicate with God and then with people, that's the order that will produce the greatest level of effectiveness. As leaders, we are as a city set upon a hill. Everywhere we go someone is watching and listening to us. We can't get away from it. Somebody that knows we are a Christian leader is watching us, everything we do, everything we say has got to communicate faith in God.[18] The necessity of communication and leadership in the church cannot be overemphasized.

When leaders don't first communicate with God: They tend to lean too much on their own understanding which often leads to trouble. Trusting in God brings good direction and success

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[18] Paul Yanggi Cho, *(Church Growth Maunal No.3) Reprinted in Nigeria by The Revd. J. C. Nwaiwu – World Vision Evangelistic Ministry Int. Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. p.185*

(Prov. 3:5-6; 14:12); They tend to rely on their own abilities or strength which often leads to burnout. Depending on God brings renewal and the ability to soar (Isa. 40:28-31; Phil. 4:13). When leaders fail to communicate with people: They open the door for possible misunderstandings which can eventually lead to divisions. They deny people a sense of ownership in the process, making the endeavor appear more as the "leader's thing" than a joint effort. The importance of communicating both with God and people cannot be over-stressed. When leaders learn to be better communicators, everything else seems to go much more effectively. Look at communication as an on-going, never-ending process, not a once and done event -- before, during, and after. A sound and healthy communication and good leadership in the missional church or elsewhere is characterized by several qualities that had been well elaborated in the body of this work. Thus, a good leadership quality fosters sound and healthy communication between the priest and congregation, which in turn leads to both spiritual, material and numerical growth and development of the church and of the congregation. The effective communication of vision to a congregation relies on the credibility of a pastor's vision: Do people believe in it? Can they believe it? Any mission vision must have credibility if people are to commit themselves to it.

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