

Church Leadership in Rural America

Discerning the Leadership Environment We Help Create

All leadership helps create the environment we operate in. A healthy leader will evaluate, through spiritual processes, the environment we help to create. After some season of time we can no longer wonder why we are here or even how we got here - you are where you are doing things the way you do them because of your leadership skills.

- All leadership creates environment and often conflicts help measure capacity.
 - ✓ There are three constants (they always exist) in environment.
 - ☞ Leaders - whether or not it is you they always exist.
 - ☞ Followers - whether or not they are following you they always exist.
 - ☞ Context/culture - whether you realize it or not there are boundaries that exist.

Acts 19:11-20, "Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, **12** so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. **13** Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." **14** Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. **15** And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" **16** Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. **17** This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. **18** And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. **19** Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. **20** So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."

ENVIRONMENT #1 - OPEN SPIRITUAL DISCERNING.

Acts 13:1-4, "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **2** As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **3** Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away. **4** So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus."

- Leadership should create an environment where potential is noticed.
 - ✓ Potential is the perceived ability to accomplish.
 - ☞ Spiritual discerning is the ability to look past what you see to see what God sees.

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- Leadership should create an environment where calling is recognized and released.
 - ✓ Calling is when God speaks to someone regarding their relationship to others.
 - ☞ Spiritual discerning is the ability to see beyond what is visible into the realm of what God is prepared to do.
 - ☞ Conflict may measure capacity to lead.

Acts 6:1-7, "Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. **2** Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. **3** Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; **4** but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." **5** And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, **6** whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. **7** Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."

ENVIRONMENT #2 - DIRECTIONAL CLARITY.

- Leadership should create an environment where directional clarity reveals a roadmap to the future.
 - ✓ People will rarely move towards anything that they don't believe in.
 - ☞ Directional clarity produces activity clarity. Pay attention to what is happening and who is doing it.
 - ☞ Directional clarity produces excellence in training. Leaders will create problems when attempting to function strongly in the wrong areas.
- Leadership should create an environment where adaptive flexibility keeps on the road of directional clarity.
 - ✓ People will rarely become flexible without transparency and practice being modeled.
 - ☞ Ambiguous outcomes rarely satisfy, be specific in your flexibility.
 - ☞ Speculation is the wisdom of fools - your motives and intentions should be on direct display, verbally and by example.
- Leadership should create an environment where adversarial survivability is the norm.
 - ✓ People will rarely try when the road is littered with the dead bodies of those who tried and failed, pick an appropriate hill to take!
 - ☞ All leadership is under attack and leadership cynicism is toxic.
 - ☞ You can survive anything if you are more than a conqueror.

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ENVIRONMENT #3 - PURPOSEFUL, PRACTICAL, PLANNED DIALOUGE.

- Leadership should create an environment where not everything is a sermon.
- ✓ Pastors are often taught to speak, but communication skills are optional.
 - ☞ Leadership language is often prayer and prayer should become increasingly a listening exercise.
 - ☞ Leadership that does not determine a conversational starting place will rarely arrive at the same place with his followers.
 - ☞ Don't say it's God just because you think He agrees with your opinion, idea, or leading.
 - ☞ Don't start with an apology, start with a confession. Confessions have substance and sustainability, apologies don't!
 - ☞ Don't exaggerate for effect, lying is not the roadmap to results.
 - ☞ Don't use comparisons to judge, others are not the standard.
 - ☞ Don't join others in the gutter of conversation.
 - ☞ Leadership that determines an appropriate starting place will -
 - ☞ Find a way to honor the past while finding the future.
 - ☞ Find a way to take responsibility for what we used to blame others for.
 - ☞ Find a way to actively listen and then give glory to God.