

BUCKINGHAM REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE BY AMERICA'S FOREMOST
CHRISTIAN ANALYZER OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE &
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S SPIRIT-LED LEADERS

HANDLING DOCTRINAL DISAGREEMENTS

Doctrinal disagreements are inevitable. In fact, there is no way we can come to perfect agreement when it comes to biblical interpretation. Good men will always disagree. The problem, therefore, is not whether we disagree, but how to treat those who disagree with us.

A classic example of spiritual maturity can be seen in the recent efforts of Earl Paulk, senior pastor of the huge Chapel Hill Harvester Church in Atlanta, to bridge the gap which exists between him and David Lewis, a strong teacher of premillennial theology and a strong supporter of Israel in prophecy. Much of the disagreement has centered around Paulk's interpretation of end times and his teachings on the kingdom of God. Somehow all this broke out in public on TV. Over the last several months, the disagreement has become something of a public debate, with people choosing sides.

Recently the two men made honest efforts to get together. In mid-February Paulk wrote Lewis a letter of apology for any hurt he may have imposed upon him personally or upon his ministry. He said, "When God calls anyone of us to a new dimension of ministry, there are many growing pains involved and perhaps the thrust that God has called me to is often taken out of context. Also my eagerness to give what I believe to be the mind of God may at times seem overstated.... I think it is unfortunate that you have heard of my attacks upon you locally, just as I have heard attacks against me at PTL.... I really do not believe that either of us intended them as attacks, and the only way to resolve the matter is in the Spirit."

Paulk, who wears a clerical collar and is called "Bishop," then went ahead to invite Lewis to share the pulpit in his active, nondenominational, charismatic church. "I believe that our spirit is one, that while we may maintain some difference in our opinions, our commitment to the leadership of Jesus Christ will be strong enough to carry us through. I think it would be good for our brethren to see you and me together sharing in the Spirit as being vital parts of the body of Christ. I would be delighted to make my pulpit that place of common sharing."

The ability to handle disagreements—and not be threatened by having the disagreeing brother preach to your congregation—is evidence of spiritual maturity. Pastors who are feeding their sheep healthy food each week do not have to be afraid when a well-meaning but differing leader serves up a different diet. In fact, peppers and onions always add flavor—and nutrition—to the standard fare of meat and potatoes. I commend Paulk and Lewis for their example to us all.

SETTING THINGS STRAIGHT

In my January 22 issue I spotlighted the "House Church" movement in England. In that article I referred to Bryn Jones, a man with proven apostolic leadership in the United Kingdom (and with some influence in America), in what some felt was a negative way. I've since rethought my remarks. Even though I stated I was acting on secondhand information, I've since realized I would not want anyone reporting on me if they had only talked to a few folks who disagreed with my methodology. None of us can stand that kind of judging. I have written Bryn, whom I consider a friend, and have asked his forgiveness. I shall be in England in May and want to make certain I have the blessing of all streams in the House Church movement—including Harvestime. I'm retracting my original judgment, which is the only way I know to undo a wrong impression.

Those of us who are in the reporting business are bound to make errors. It is pride which prevents us from retracting, correcting or admitting an error (or, in this case, a misimpression). There are enough people in the kingdom tearing things down without my joining the wrecking crew.

And while I'm setting things straight: In an earlier article on the International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem, I attributed to Haim Shapiro of the **Jerusalem Post** a remark made to Derek Prince. Derek has written, asking me to inform you that he has never discussed the embassy with Shapiro. The quote, related to me personally by Derek, was from another Jewish source.

FLORIDA GOVERNOR AND CABINET VOTE DOWN CREATION STORY

Gov. Bob Graham and the Florida Cabinet have voted that biology textbooks for public schools must not refer to biblical creation as a legitimate theory. Opponents said the books present Darwin's theories of evolution as fact and ignore creationism, which, they said, should at least be presented as a viable theory. In the March 4 vote, Graham and the Cabinet, who sit as the state Board of Education, were unanimous in opposing any mention of God or even in referring to the biblical account of creation in any public school textbook. Graham is running for the U.S. Senate against Republican Senator Paula Hawkins, a Mormon.

LEAD ON!

Military leaders know there is a vast difference between a man in a command position and a commander. Entire wars have been lost by having little men in big positions.

Experts point out that one of the reasons the once-proud Filipino army faded away to its sorry state was the Marcos system of cronyism, in which he appointed his friends as generals, rather than letting them earn their way up through the ranks. That's the difference between holding a command position—and being a commander.

Kings who have inherited their thrones, sons who have become president of the corporation because their father holds majority stock, athletes who play first team because their dad is the coach—there are exceptions, of course, but all are courting disaster. It raises the question: are leaders born, or can they be made?

In a powerful new book on leadership, world statesman John Haggai tells the

other side of the story. He points out that while there is no substitute for experience, it is possible for men in command positions to become commanders. That means there is hope for a number of us who feel we're supposed to be in charge but wonder, sometimes, how to exert authority. Titled **Lead On!** (Word Books, \$11.95), the book proves there is a way to learn to be a leader without having your head bloodied in the school of hard knocks.

Haggai, founder and director of the Haggai Institute for Advanced Leadership Training, speaks throughout the world, not only in church leadership conferences but for business and civic organizations. A true world statesman, he is one of the most powerful forces for God in the Third World. At his overseas base in Singapore (home base is Atlanta) he trains Third World leaders in leadership methods as well as in evangelism methods. His new book embodies principles he has tested in the 82 nations where his students now serve in top positions.

A second Word book (co-published with **Christianity Today**) is Fred Smith's outstanding book on management principles, titled **Learning to Lead**. Smith, a longtime business consultant, aptly points out that no man is a leader unless he has followers. A leader, he says, is one who can get those followers to do the work better than he or she can—one who can bring out the best in people. The book is worth the price simply for the chapter "An Emergency Plan for Saving Time."

Do yourself a favor and ask your secretary to order both books. You may not feel like a commander, but you can become one if you put these principles into practice in your ministry.

IN THIS ISSUE I AM SPOTLIGHTING...

THE CHRISTIAN LEADER'S REPORT CARD

Sadly, many Christian leaders, including pastors, never pause to evaluate what they are doing. They just plunge ahead doing the right things but seldom taking time to determine if they are doing it the right way. Often this produces spectacular short-range results but long-range chaos.

The recipe for success has new ingredients. Because in a changing environment one cannot continue to succeed by doing what one did in the past, most pastors can expect major changes in their churches—or in their vocational lives—before they retire. Your church or organization will be greatly affected by these changes, of course.

Given the reality of rapid change all around us, many churches are wondering what criteria can be used to evaluate today's pastors and Christian leaders. Here are five areas each leader should regularly re-examine in his own life. I have also included five self-test questions to help you assess your performance in the light of today's changes. Answer them honestly and perhaps you will find ways to stretch yourself as a leader and grow as a man of God.

Finances

Like it or not, today's church or Christian organization runs on money. Pastors like to think they are the "spiritual" head of the church, but they are also the financial director. Your decisions cost money. Buildings, programs, ministries, services—all cost. The money does not come from products produced and sold, as in the marketplace; rather the money comes from tithes and offerings. That makes the money sacred—for it is money given not to the church, but to God. You are the custodian of God's money.

- **Ask yourself how many times in the last year you have consciously thought about the consequences your current financial policies and decisions will have on the church five and 10 years hence.**

Integrity

For more than five years I have been collecting stories—many of them in print—of Christian leaders (including pastors) who have “gone bad.” These are men who started out serving God but wound up serving self. These involve not only acquaintances around the nation but some of my close friends. Many of them have been fired from their churches or Christian organizations, jailed, fined or publicly disgraced for their ethical indiscretions. Many of them have gotten involved in financial scandals or have left their wives and children for sensual satisfaction. The openness of our society—in fact the very structure of our churches built as they are on trust and dependability—means we will not long tolerate a spiritual leader who compromises on fairness and honesty, who lies, cheats and steals in the areas of finances, morals and personal integrity. Ralph Waldo Emerson put all Christian leaders on the examining block when he said, “What you do thunders so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say.”

- **Ask yourself: “Am I totally honest with my wife, my staff members, my superiors? Do I practice what I preach when it comes to morality, family relationships, greed, ambition, prayer and personal discipline? Am I the kind of example God wants me to be before my flock—and in my private life as well?”**

Creativity

The huge changes facing the church in the areas of technology demand new thinking. Just keeping up in this rapidly changing society demands our best. Last month I asked a friend of mine who is a member of a small Baptist church in the mountains of North Carolina, “How is the church coming along?”

“Not only is it not coming along,” he answered, “it’s moving backward.”

Pastored by a Bob Jones University theological professor who drives up the mountain twice a week to preach, the church is gradually falling behind. People are not only not joining, they’re leaving. The theology and the methodology remain the same as they were 30 years ago when fundamentalists said all you had to do to draw a crowd was preach against something.

Pastors need to be stretching themselves regularly or they may arise one morning to find their church gone. Sheep will munch on the same old grass for just so long, then they will find greener pastures with more nourishment. I find I must regularly take time away from the fast lane to retreat to a quiet place for a few days in order to hear God. (In fact, this article is written from my mountain cabin where I’ve gone for a few days to trust the Creator to inspire me with His creative thoughts.) I discipline myself to read books which stimulate my creativity. (Try, for instance, Roger von Oech’s book, **A Whack on the Side of the Head**, Creative Think, Inc., Menlo Park, CA, 1983, which describes 10 things that inhibit our creative thinking.) I also select occasional movies which stimulate me to think or excite me to write something as good.

- **How often in the last six months have you read a book in an area radically different from your field? How often in the last six months have you taken a day off, gotten alone and contemplated what you would do with**

your life if: (a) someone gave you \$10 million and you could use it as you want; (b) you were told you had only six months to live; (c) the president of the United States called and said he wanted you to move to Washington as his personal, spiritual advisor; (d) you were offered a spot on NBC television nightly news to talk about spiritual things but could not use the word "Jesus"; (e) God told you in a dream that He was going to pour out His Holy Spirit on your church next Sunday just as He did in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost?

Future Vision

There is no way today's Christian leader can do his job effectively without prophetic insight into the future. The effective leader always knows what is coming on several fronts. He is in touch with population statistics, with sociological and anthropological trends, with the direction of the economy, and, most important, with God's word for today. He is a world citizen with equal compassion for those in primitive societies as for those in his own flock. In addition to knowing what is going on in the real and the spirit world, he is constantly integrating these factors in his own personal life and the life of his organization. Today's leader not only has to cope with the often damaging image given to the man of God by the clowns, clods and money-grubbers who appear on television, but he must figure some way to use this marvelous medium for the glory of God.

In 1947 Max Weber published **The Theory of Social and Economic Organization**, in which he set forth 10 rules of bureaucracies that have dominated our organizational structures for the last 100 years. His system was built on a shift from loyalty to a nobleman to loyalty to an office (the word is "bureau" in French) or an organizational title. We see this in the church as the "office of pastor" is raised to the level of nobility, and the titles of pastor, evangelist, apostle, prophet, and teacher become extremely important—important enough for men of God to start introducing themselves as "Pastor Jones." As a result, many pastors begin to think of themselves as infallible because of the lofty title they have given themselves. Men begin to rely more on titles and positions than on ability and dependency on God. Such are the results of bureaucracy.

I felt sad when I received a letter from the pastor of a large church who is raising money for a TV ministry. I've known this pastor for years as a man with an effective—yes, a miraculous—ministry. Several years ago he started introducing himself as "Pastor So-and-so." I understood. Having come from nothing, the title gave him a sense of importance. Last year he shifted into a clerical collar. I was bothered, for this was another step upward toward nobility. Then last week I opened his letter and discovered he had given himself an honorary degree. Honorary degrees are honorable, but not when self-conferred. This powerful man of miracles who once depended on God has now made the subtle shift to dependency on the bureaucracy—one he has, incidentally, created.

The emerging system in management is called a "visiocracy" because the power is not in the office but in the vision of the individuals. This shifts the power from title to prophetic insight. The spiritual leaders of the future will be those who have a clear vision of the church's mission. Bureaucracies encourage leaders who have no purpose but survival (i.e., "I plan to stay in this church until I retire"). The vision-seer and vision-communicator, however, are able to catch God's plan for the future of His church and communicate that plan to people in such a way that they, too, become part of the vision.

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- **Have you in the past six months written down your vision for the future of your church or organization? What is the next step God wants you to take? What are the long-range goals you should shoot for?**

Adapting to and Using Change

We live in a rapidly changing, dynamic and exciting society. To us whose chief task is communication, there are more avenues of communication open than ever before. The wise leader, despite his age, is not only open to change, he causes it. Every time the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Scripture, He is associated with motion. Motion means change—and conflict. These twins are not our enemies; they are tools given us by God to help us move our people closer to Him. Utilizing change can be summarized by two wise men, separated in time by 1,500 years and in space by 10,000 miles.

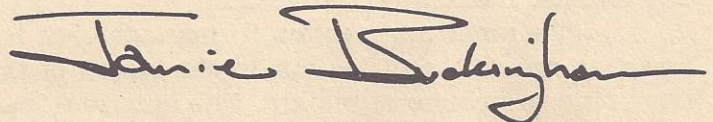
First the Chinese philosopher Chuang Tsu, who, speaking of the importance of breadth of perspective, once asked the following questions:

- How shall I talk of the sea to the frog if it has never left its pond?
- How shall I talk of the frost to the bird of the summer land, if it has never left the land of its birth?
- How shall I talk of life with the sage if he is a prisoner of his doctrine?

The second quote comes from a soldier who, early in his career, waged fierce and cruel war on the country next to his. He fought with vengeance, hatred, and at huge financial and human cost. His total desire was to obliterate the neighboring nation from the face of the earth. Gradually, though, he began to see the foolishness of war, and later, as a statesman, he became the first leader of his kind to visit the other country and sign a treaty of peace. He was assassinated by his own people because they could not catch his vision, but before his death he noted: "He who cannot change the very fabric of his thought will never be able to change reality."

His name was Anwar Sadat.

- **Are you willing to change your reality as reality changes around you? To be an effective leader, you must.**



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