Relational Principles for Effective Church Leadership

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Abstract

In the 21st century, effective church leaders need to be prepared to emphasize and demonstrate ethical leadership, personal responsibility, and community service. The foundation for success in all those areas lies in the ability of church leaders to initiate, develop, and maintain positive functioning relationships. Based on over 40 years experience in various church leadership roles, the author provides his unique relational principles of effective church leadership, including (a) mission, (b) conflict management, (c) power and influence, (d) collaboration, (e) emotions are facts, (f) forgiveness, (g) reconciliation, and (h) love.

Introduction

"If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest."
(Matthew 20:26, TEV)

The call to be a church leader may take the form of preacher, pastor, teacher, counselor, missionary, small group leader, or other church related ministry, but no matter what the call, the Church needs to identify and provide leaders with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to reach today's culture. Current church leaders need to prepare others for effective leadership by educating, equipping, enriching, and empowering them for the work of the Church in general, and life in the world at large.

In the 21st century the Church will need godly leaders capable of influencing others for a life of influence if it is to achieve its mission. Leaders must understand church government and politics, the effects of diversity in theology and worship, and the spiritual formation of church followers, program planning, and administration, as well as age-level specific best practices. Just as important, church leaders must be prepared to emphasize and demonstrate ethical leadership, personal responsibility, and community service through the initiation, development, and maintenance of positive functioning relationships.

What is required to prepare future church leaders? I hope to provide you with some insight based on more than 40 years of experience in various church leadership roles. During this time it has been my good fortune to have taught leadership development courses for 21 years at state-supported institutions of higher education. In addition, as vice president for academic affairs and academic dean at a central plains Christian

college I taught a church leadership development course, and for the past 13 years I have taught various leadership courses (specifically church leadership) at a private, religious liberal arts university in the southeastern part of the United States.

In this paper, I will provide my unique view of several relational principles to promote effective relational church leadership regardless of your role and position in the church – formal or informal. Specific areas addressed include: (a) mission, (b) conflict management, (c) power and influence, (d) collaboration, (e) emotions are facts, (f) forgiveness, (g) reconciliation, and (h) love.

Relational Theoretical Foundations

Relational theory is a relatively new concept in the leadership literature. There are two basic perspectives. The first view focuses on identifying attributes of individual people engaged in interpersonal relationships. A second view suggests relationships are products of the process of social interaction. The two views have similarities; in fact, in some ways they complement each other.

Like interpersonal communication, relational communication deals with communication between people. It is usually face-to-face. Communicative messages are the vehicles "through which we develop, maintain, and improve human relationships" (Tubbs & Moss, 1981, p. 107). In essence, effective relational communication is the life-blood of all relationships.

Relational theory is based on four interpersonal communication assumptions. According to Littlejohn (1999), relationships are "connected through communication" (p. 252). He further indicats that the "nature of the relationship is defined by the communication between its members" (p. 252). Additionally, Littlejohn suggests that relationships are usually defined implicitly rather than explicitly (p. 252). His fourth assumption is that "relationships develop over time through a negotiation process" (p. 252). He points out that as a consequence of the previous assumptions, "relationships are dynamic, not unchanging" (p. 252).

People initiate, develop, and maintain relationships for a variety of reasons (DeVito, 2002). DeVito suggests people fundamentally seek to maximize pleasure and minimize pain through relational interactions; that is, people seek relationships in order to satisfy a sense of belonging, decrease feelings of loneliness, find opportunities for intellectual and physical stimulation, and achieve personal empowerment as well as to enhance self-esteem.

Burgoon, Buller, Hale, and deTurck (1984) indicate relational interaction is comprised of both verbal and nonverbal communication reflecting how a person regards oneself, the other, and the relationship. Hence, Trenholm (2001) suggested people "form close relationships with people who affirm our identities and abilities, who see the world as we do" (p. 146). She further asserts that we form relationships with others "because they allow us to be who we want to be" (p. 146).

Relational communication theory suggests all interaction among people involves content and relationship messages. Burgoon and Hale (1984) state that relational messages are frequently communicated via nonverbal channels. According to Burgoon et al. (1984) and Burgoon and Hale (1984), these messages form relationships that are based on (a) affection, (b) composure, (c) dominance, (d) emotions, (e) formality, (f) inclusion, (g) intimacy, (h) involvement, (i) similarity, (j) superficiality, (k) task-social factors, and (l) trust.

Adler, Proctor, and Towne (2005) note some theorists suggest that the best way to understand relational interaction is through dialectical tensions. Generally speaking dialectic tensions are understood to be "a result of conflicts that arise when two opposing or incompatible forces exist simultaneously" (p. 301). *Connection-autonomy dialectic* tensions reflect conflicting desires to be connected to others, yet to maintain personal autonomy. The need to share information through self-disclosure while maintaining some distance between themselves and others has been labeled *openness-privacy dialectic*. The *predictability-novelty dialectic* reflects the tension that exists between a need for stability without too many feelings of staleness in the relationship.

Relational Leadership Theory

First, what is leadership? In the literature there are a multitude of definitions of leadership. For example, going back some 30 years, "Leadership is any action that focuses resources to create new opportunities" (Campbell, 1980). More recently, Shockley-Zalabak (2012) suggests leadership is a process of influence – i.e., "Leaders communicate about needed change, translate intentions into reality, propose new strategies, and help sustain action to support decisions" (p. 212).

A second question is, "What is relational leadership?" In 1977 Greenleaf (cited in Spears, 2010) launched a relational leadership movement founded on the principle that effective leaders must be servants first. He has suggested servant leaders focus on (a) involving others in decision making, (b) demonstrating caring toward others, (c) adhering to ethical behavior, (d) showing interest in the growth of their direct reports and other affected parties, and (e) seeking success and improvement for the organization. Based on Greenleaf's original work, Spears identifies 10 characteristics of a servant leader – listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community.

Korngold (2006) suggested that people who are willing to take on leadership roles stand out among their peers. Thus, in this context, relational leadership is a process of social influence and is impacted by the organization's social order. This process of emerging leadership is part of the inherent, ongoing change within an organization as leaders develop and implement innovative approaches to the organization's activities as it seeks to accomplish its mission.

Cunliffe (2011) indicates relational leadership theory is embedded in the relationally-responsive dialogic practices of leaders. She suggests that effective relational leadership requires ways of engagement wherein leaders hold themselves morally responsible as members of relationships. Individuals need to be sensitive to the importance of their relationships – conversations and everyday activities – in order to be responsible leaders.

Relational Church Leadership

The Church is one body made up of many people; most of whom are volunteers serving God and His people. How does this apply to relational church leadership? Lockett and Boyd (2012) state, "As with all developmental processes, individual volunteers in a given program will be at various points developmentally in the process of becoming leaders and finding their leadership identity" (p. 240). They indicate that this has the potential to cause conflicts due to a lack of understanding and perspective regarding other people, their thoughts, and their actions. The words and actions of church leaders "will 'set the pace' for creating an environment of security, trust, and acceptance" (p. 240). That being said, let us explore several relational principles which affect effective church leadership.

Mission

Fulenwider (1997) indicates one of God's spiritual gifts given to His people is the gift of leadership. He defined this gift as "the God-empowered ability to set goals in accordance with God's purpose and to motivate others in the body of Christ to voluntarily and harmoniously work together to accomplish those goals for the glory of God" (p. 256).

According to Shockley-Zalabak (2012), "Nowhere is communication competency more important than when individuals attempt to lead and establish vision and direction for organizations" (p. 230). Church leaders must make it a part of their daily business to clearly communicate their vision and goals to complete the organization's mission.

Relational leaders understand God provides everything they need to carry out their mission. According to Wilkes (1998), God has empowered His people "with the Holy Spirit, the authority of the name of Jesus, and the assurance that all [their] needs will be met" (p. 135). When leaders place their trust in God then they can endure whatever personal risks may come their way as they serve God's people. Such leadership is willing to use their training and skills to provide for the needs of others and the success of the Church.

Covey (1989) identifies seven habits that highly effective people practice. In some form or other these habits are often found in the lives of effective church leaders; however, relational church leaders must go beyond these seven habits to include the essence of Covey's (2004) *Habit #8: From Effectiveness to Greatness: Discover Your Voice – Inspire Others to Find Their Voice*. Given the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:18-20), churches cannot afford to simply be effective in reaching their various programming goals to survive in today's world; the Church also needs leaders who are passionate and want to make a significant contribution to the lives of those they serve.

Setting a vision requires an act of integrity based on an understanding of who you are, what you believe in and stand for, and what is most important to you. Clarifying your BAV set (i.e., beliefs, attitudes, values) gives a person the confidence needed to not only take charge of one's life, but to bring others on board to achieve mutually satisfying goals for the success of the Church.

In Habit #2: Begin with the end in mind, Covey (1989) noted the need for setting clear expectations. Church leaders must be proactive in their efforts to fulfill the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:18-20). Church leaders need to think about such questions as "What will your legacy be when God calls you home? What will the church where you serve and worship be as a result of your efforts?" It is important that church leaders "begin with end in mind" (Covey, 1989). The Apostle Paul clearly set his vision, his goal for his work: "So we preach Christ to everyone. With all possible wisdom we warn and teach them in order to bring each one into God's presence as a mature individual in union with Christ" (Colossians 1:28, TEV).

Conflict Management

A common saying is, "Put any two people in a locked room for two minutes and you will have conflict." As is true in any situation, in church relationships conflict is natural, it is inevitable, and it is ongoing because conflict occurs when people have either real or perceived incompatible goals.

Each person has a preferred way of dealing with conflict – avoidance or engagement. *Avoidance* tactics, while temporarily may be used, cannot effectively manage conflicts. They only put off the needed communication. *Competing* approaches assume someone has to win and the other has to lose, thereby reducing people's willingness to listen to each other and work together. *Compromising* seems to be the popular view for effective conflict management; however, it is a lose/lose proposition. In this approach each party gives up some of what they want to the other party in order to get some of what they want (i.e., ½ loaf of bread to each party). In the long run, no one is fully satisfied with the outcome. Some people seek to *accommodate* with the other party. This approach is lose/win. The accommodating partner (who loses) is willing to give in and give up in an effort to please the other and end the conflict. The final approach is a win/win *collaboration* wherein parties listen to each other and work for mutually satisfying outcomes.

When conflicts arise in the Church it is most likely the parties have known each other for quite awhile. They believe they know the other person. The individual believes the situation will be dealt with in a fair manner; however, while they may know the person, opinions and inferences about the individual are founded upon personal biases. Therefore, inasmuch as "God wants us to help save the people of our culture, not fight them…we must work hard at *understanding* those in our circle of influence" (Batten, Batten, & Howard, 1997, p. 285).

An important conflict management skill is the ability to agree to disagree. This takes a commitment to accept disagreement, but to disagree with civility. Campbell (1980) emphatically say, "Avoid personalized attacks" (p. 90). He further instructs to avoid personal topics, using abusive language, and attacking the other party. Instead, he encourages people to "bring the facts" (p. 91). In Stonecipher's (2012) research on controversy with civility and spirituality, he concludes that "controversy with civility followed closely behind civility in [its] relationship with spirituality" (p. 94). His findings showed:

> By engaging in the messy and contentious discussions of spirituality, faith, and religion, students have the opportunity to develop the skill of discussing tough topics while demonstrating respect for others, a willingness to hear others' views, and to exercise restraint in criticizing others' views and actions. (p. 94)

His conclusion was that the skills "developed in learning how to debate the tough secular matters openly and with civility are translatable to the discussions involved in the spiritual quest" (p. 94).

Power and Influence

In conflict situations people typically believe the other party in the conflict has the most power to control the conflict outcome. But what is power? Power typically takes on three forms: *designated* power that comes from one's position, *distributive* power that comes from your ability to achieve your objective, and *integrative* power, which is a result of your interaction with others.

According to Wilmot and Hocker (2011), "Interpersonal power is the ability to influence a relational partner in any context because you control, or at least the partner perceives that you control, resources that the partner needs, values, desires, or fears" (p. 116) while being able to "resist the influence attempts of a partner" (p. 116). Because power is a fundamental concept in conflict theory, it is important to understand it and to take it into account when dealing with others.

In their relationships church leaders must be aware of the element of relational dominance – how individuals distribute power within relationships. For the relationship to be effective those involved must decide who is in the dominant position. Then, they need to determine whether they feel comfortable with the level of control each individual has in the relationship.

Wilmot and Hocker (2011) offer four basic currencies church leaders have at their disposal: (a) *Resource control* – based on a formal position in the church wherein the person has control of rewards and punishments like salary, work hours, time off, and retirement. (b) *Interpersonal linkages* – based on personal networks, liaison positioning, and being centralized within the flow of communication. (c) *Communication skills* – based on conversational skills, listening, and persuasiveness. (d) *Expertise* – based on possessing special knowledge, skills, and talents.

What distinguishes leaders who submit to the authority of Jesus rather than those who depend on their natural abilities to lead? The difference is that the former recognize that Jesus was an effective leader because he gained his followers support because "they admired the power he demonstrated over demons, disease, and the elements. But they stayed with the Lord Jesus because He loved them. He served them" (Wilkes, 1985, p. 129). Effective church leaders recognize that relational power is the outcome of working with others to achieve mutually satisfactory goals; being a relational church leader is often more about one's ability to influence others, rather than having power.

Collaboration

In today's society people are told to be winners, not whiners. The Church exists in a dog-eat-dog world where I am #1 and I must win at all costs. From birth people are taught to be competitive, and when people perceive that what they want is limited or finite, they design strategies and use tactics to maximize their chances of getting most, if not all, of the pie. It is a win/lose style – I win/you lose.

Relational church leaders, however, could benefit from more collaboration and less competiveness. Collaboration is a win/win interactional style with the intention of enlarging the pie by working together so everyone gains something they value. All parties are comfortable with how the pie is sliced.

Being a relational church leader means seeking to motivate others to harmoniously work together to accomplish the goals set for the glory of God (Fulenwider, 1997) by collaboration.

Wilmot and Hocker (2011) indicatee that collaboration is "a willingness to move with rather than against the other – a willingness to explore and struggle precisely when you may not feel like it" (p. 173). Collaboration means individuals do not give away their interests instead they integrate them with the other's self-interests to reach agreement and harmony. Batten et al. (1997) suggest that "cooperation brings greater achievement than competing with others, but this means being more vulnerable and less defensive" (p. 253).

Keep in mind that "vulnerability brings synergy – true cooperation" (Batten et al., 1997, p. 255). Church leaders must demonstrate what other people think and say, which requires courage, humility, openness, and vulnerability. Trust in each other is important and vulnerability plays a vital role in forming trust.

Trenholm (2001) indicated that "when we open up to others, we make ourselves vulnerable" (p. 147). This openness is impacted by the power and influence, real or perceived, that individuals share in their relationships; thereby, the degree of trust present in a relationship is directly and positively impacted.

Emotions are Facts

Wilmot and Hocker (2011) suggest that "feelings are facts" (p. 194). The reality is that emotions are both intrapersonal and interpersonal states of feelings; however, people act as if joy, happiness, sadness, depression, frustration, anger, fear, resentment, and other emotions are to be found out there somewhere beyond the individual and his-her internal state of mind. The truth is emotions are internal experiences that affect everyone involved in a relationship.

Feelings influence how a person reacts in a given situation. Generally, people's emotions are perceived as being good or bad, helpful or destructive. It would behoove us to recognize that the emotions a person expresses are not right or wrong– it is just how the individual is feeling at that time, in that situation. Effective relational church leaders should keep in mind that for each person the feeling is real.

Covey (1989) encourages people to carry their own weather; that is, to be less reactive to others and situations and to be more proactive when dealing with one's own and the emotional feelings of others. Church leaders must remember that emotions are like the wind-- they move and flow during the interaction all the time and yet they cannot be seen. Emotions are a part of being human. They define the type of relationships we have with others. Yet, because people often find it difficult to express how they feel, it is incumbent on church leadership to listen to the other person. They need to sound-out the other person, especially in a conflict situation.

Forgiveness

According to Wilmot and Hocker (2011), "Relational harm occurs across a wide spectrum from regrettable and hurtful messages to psychological and physical violence" (p. 297). The truth of the matter is that people harm each other by what they do, what they say, and what they do not say. Despite our best laid plans and efforts to maintain positive functioning relationships, conflicts occur. They are inevitable because from time to time these efforts fail, and such failures will likely leave one or more persons feeling betrayed, deceived, embittered, or even isolated, resulting in a deteriorating or broken relationship.

Sadly enough, when people feel hurt, angry, or sad they sometimes do things to others that violate their beliefs, attitudes, and values. When people feel wronged they too often want to get even with the other party. Getting even is like poison. Instead of revenge or retribution, people should seek forgiveness. At that point they need to be able forgive the other party and themselves in order to move forward to do God's work.

What is forgiveness? It is a process. It can be "undertaken by one person in relation to another, with or without interaction with that person" (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011, p. 302).

How can one person forgive another person who has committed a "wrong?" Wayne Muller (cited in Batten et al., 1997) points out:

What we are forgiving is not the act…we are forgiving the actors…Forgiveness is required of us in rich measure, not because the hurts that come are not painful but because it is forgiveness that sets us free, that heals the unspeakable wounds, that allows us to grow in spirit…When we forgive one another our clumsiness, we are set free of the past, we are free to be born fresh into this moment." (p. 273)

Forgiveness is acting from a position of strength; it is not a sign of weakness. It is not about overlooking what was said or done by someone in the church. People should not allow an inability to forgive others to disempower them in their relationships with others within the Church specifically and, in general, the entire culture.

It should be noted that church leaders need not minimize or dismiss what has happened. Batten et al. (1997) advised, "Forgive quickly but don't accept deliberate violations of integrity and character values" (p. 281).

Reconciliation

Forgiveness and reconciliation are synonymous. Forgiveness does not overlook the offending act, but the actor. Therefore, forgiveness is a process involving both a state of mind and an ongoing activity and reconciliation is about relational renewal.

Once a person has decided to forgive the offending party, the goal should then be to achieve reconciliation among the affected parties. Like forgiveness, reconciliation is a process. It requires the proper state of mind and action on the part of the perpetrator and the victim over time. Reconciliation involves the process of "reestablishing relationship, renewing trust, settling differences so that cooperation and a sense of harmony are restored" (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011, p. 302).

While forgiveness can and may involve only one partner, reconciliation means both parties are reunited in their relationship. Reconciliation is a mutual agreement to heal the relationship. It begins with a willingness by everyone affected to reengage each other to prevent additional injury while renewing their relationship.

Love

According to Stonecipher (2012), authentic leadership has five dimensions – purpose, values, heart, relationships, and self-discipline. He suggests that effective spiritual leadership is defined by the values and character of individuals. The construct of relational church leadership, therefore, must include an understanding of leadership grounded upon a person's spiritual center – love.

When asked what the greatest commandment of the Law was, Jesus responded, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind…The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself'" (Matthew 22:37-39, TEV). In his answer, Jesus used the Greek word *agape* – a word showing general affection, or, in a deeper sense, "godly love." In a biblical sense it

is described by the Apostle Paul as a sacrificial love (see I Corinthians 13). It may be used to refer to the feelings a person has for one's spouse. *Agape* can also describe the feeling of being content or of being held in high regard such as in God's love for us or our love for Him. Early followers understood it to express the unconditional love of God.

How is the word love understood in today's culture? According to DeVito (2002), while men tend to place more emphasis on romance than women, it appears men and women also differ in the type of love they desire and seek in relationships. Many men prefer erotic, ludic love; however, the majority of women want to be involved in manic, pragmatic, or storgic types of love situations. He pointed out that as it relates to male and female preferences for different types of love, there is no difference in men's and women's preferences for "agapic love" (p. 208); that is, the type of love Jesus and Paul spoke about in the previous references.

A lesson for those fulfilling formal and informal leadership roles in the Church is that individuals must learn to love others in the agapic sense. Church leaders should respect and admire all types of other people. People must learn to love and respect others as they become aware of God's love for His people. Everyone wins "when we love, because love unlocks the wonders of God's world" (Batten et al., 1997, p. 224).

Applications for Leadership Educators

Given so many definitions of leadership, the ultimate question is, "Can a person learn to be a leader?" It is my contention that the answer to this question is a resounding "yes" because leadership involves skills and we learn skills through study, observation of others, and practice.

As an educator I have come to understand that leadership is not dependent on personal demographics, it comes in all ages, sizes, shapes, and from both genders. In today's culture people find themselves in situations which require them to accept and demonstrate effective leadership. It does not matter what a person's life experiences are, successful leadership is primarily dependent on the quality of the relationships a person has established. Learning to lead in the Church or elsewhere is a developmental process.

Researchers, educators, those in business and government, and yes, even those in the Church, have long sought to clarify what leadership is and identify the skill sets that allow an individual to lead effectively. In fact, many agree on what people want from their leaders. For example, they want credible, trustworthy leaders who have a sense of direction and the ability to get there. Yet, sometimes despite all the study of leadership, people still do not see eye-to-eye on this subject because they come to an understanding of leadership from diverse perspectives, disciplines, and cultures.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) suggest that teaching future leaders various "strategies, tactics, skills, and practices [is] empty unless we understand the fundamental human aspirations that connect leaders and constituents" (p. 1). Leadership is after all a relationship between those who choose to lead and those who choose to follow – a reciprocal process.

It was out of an awareness of the importance of the reciprocal nature of leadership that I undertook this effort to share several principles of effective Church leadership. I am convinced that students in churches and in institutions of higher education need to be provided leadership development opportunities in these arenas as they prepare to be future leaders. There is a need for ethical and relational leadership not only in society, in general, but specifically in the Church.

- **Mission**. Future church leaders must be able to unite everyone in the same direction; if people do not know where they are going, then they will diverge and never be successful in fulfilling the mission of the Church. Therefore, leadership development programs must instruct students on identification of a vision and establishing the mission they are to accomplish through goal-setting. Goal setting approaches such as S.M.A.R.T can and should be taught to students along with effective time management principles (e.g., Covey Time Matrix). Of course, as Shockley-Zabalak (2012) indicates, effective leaders must be able to demonstrate communication competency in order to present and carry out their visions and directions for their churches and organizations.

- **Conflict management**. While working to achieve the mission, a common dilemma facing leaders of all types is how to use their power to influence others (see Hocker & Wilmot, 2011) in order to handle conflicts effectively; that is, to deal with controversy with civility. How Church and other leaders handle this challenge is a major determinant of the quality of the relationship they provide to their followers. As Lockett and Boyd (2012) suggest, leading is a developmental process; therefore, a potential exists for conflicts to develop due to a lack of understanding and perspective regarding others' thoughts and actions. Batten et al. (1997) affirmed how crucial it is for leaders to have an understanding of those within their circle of influence. Educators must teach leadership students about the nature of conflict, metaphorical implications, and how to map their conflicts. Inasmuch as custody-visitation mediators are trained to work in the court system then educators ought to be training those who hold leadership positions in churches. Power is a fundamental element in conflicts; therefore, it is important to understand it and to take it into account when dealing with others.

- **Power and influence**. Legitimate power is determined by the position or role a person holds; however, authentic relational power is always given to a leader by those being led. It is the ability to influence others. Real power happens when the church leader is a servant first (Greenleaf cited in Spears, 2010). Educators can provide mock classroom and real life experiences for students which allow leadership students to not only intellectually understand this principle, but to experience its validity. When educators provide students the opportunity to experience integrative power through role-playing, group assignments, student government, sports, internships, and other learning situations then they have benefitted from the learning experience.

- **Collaboration**. Competition can be fun; however, relational church leaders will benefit from more collaboration and less competiveness because collaboration is a win/win approach to human interaction. In this approach the intention is to work together, not against each other so everyone gains something they value – all parties win. Civility, as noted by Stonecipher (2012), is an important element of such collaborative efforts. A good outcome results when leadership motivates others to harmoniously work together to accomplish the mission and goals of the Church.

- **Emotions are facts**. Relational injuries, often during conflict situations, result from what people do, what they say, and what they do not say. As leadership educators it is imperative that future leaders be taught how to deal with their own feelings in an appropriate manner; after all, feelings are facts (Hocker and Wilmot, 2011). In addition, it is essential that these leaders learn how to identify feelings related to such acts as betrayal, deception, and isolation. By encouraging students to enroll in counseling, psychology, and interpersonal communication courses, it is possible that future leaders will be able to learn about and develop requisite skills for handling the variety of positive and negative feelings they will face during their time in a leadership role. Effective Church leaders must be rhetorically sensitive because their words and actions will set the tone that creates the relational environment with others. Therefore, leadership educators must help them assess their EQs as well as their IQs.

- **Forgiveness**. Communication is a key vehicle people use to initiate, develop, and, maintain their relationships (Tubbs & Moss, 1981; Littlejohn, 1999). Being able to communicate forgiveness is one aspect of relational maintenance because hurting people feel hurt, anger, and sadness when they feel wronged. The all too common response is to try to get even with the other person. Being a leader means having to take the responsibility for when things do not go well, and giving the credit to others when they go well. Leaders get the "blame" – fair or not. An effective Church leader needs to learn how to seek to forgive real or perceived wrongs instead of looking for revenge or retribution. They need to understand the quicksand of revenge-seeking and be able to forgive the other party in order to move forward to do God's work. Leadership educators should provide learning opportunities in courses about ethics, psychology, communication, management, and leadership, and they must mentor behaviors which demonstrate their commitment to practice forgiveness.

- **Reconciliation**. The resolution of the dialectic tension arising from human conflict (Adler, Proctor, & Towne, 2005) involves more than just forgiving the offending party. The goal of church leaders must be to achieve reconciliation. Reestablishing relationships by settling differences in order to renew trust so that people can once again work cooperatively is vital to the success of the Church. Here again, leadership educators can provide learning opportunities in ethics, management, and leadership courses, and they must mentor behaviors which

demonstrate the commitment to not only forgive offending parties, but to renew relationships in order to do the work of the Church.

- **Love**. Agapic love is the foundation of the "Golden Rule." If current church leaders want the future leaders of the church to respect and admire them, then they must be willing to do the same. This begins with the right attitude of the heart – to desire the best for others – toward all types of people. And, especially as Church leaders, these individuals must not only talk the talk, they must walk the talk. As church leadership educators people must love others even as they experience God's love for them.

Conclusion

After more than four decades serving in various leadership capacities in the Church as well as teaching general leadership courses and church leadership in university settings, I present in this paper unique relational principles I believe to be essential in the repertoire of every church leader. One of God's gifts is the gift of leadership (Fulenwider (1997). I am convinced effective church leadership includes these principles: (a) mission, (b) conflict management, (c) power and influence, (d) collaboration, (e) emotions are facts, (f) forgiveness, (g) reconciliation, and (h) love. Regardless of one's position in the Church, I am convinced these ideas about relational principles provide worthwhile suggestions on how to be an effective leader. The information presented reflects intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of what it will take for men and women to be effective in their interactions as a church leader. It is my hope that this look at developing relational church leadership will provide future leaders with an understanding of this unique view of church leadership. Further, I hope they will be able to apply these concepts to lead effectively from this perspective in their local churches. Remember the foundation for this discussion lies in this statement by Christ Jesus, *"If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest" (Matthew 20:26, TEV)*.

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