



HELPING CHURCH LEADERS MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE

Number 63 January 20, 1997

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A CHECKLIST FOR CHANGE AGENTS

An increasing role for pastors in the 21st century is that of change agent. Wayne Schmidt, pastor of the Kentwood Community Wesleyan Church has developed a "top ten" checklist of questions that help him discern if he is staying in his comfort zone or being a courageous change agent. The following is used with permission from the latest issue of *Strategies for Today's Leaders*, Box 145, Corunna, IN 46730, (800) 626-8515.

"I have come to realize that you can neither create a movement of God's spirit nor control it. But you can build an atmosphere conducive to spiritual momentum, thereby serving as a human catalyst for what God has decided to do. Change can be intimidating, but it can also create new openness in the hearts and minds of people. It has a potentially destructive streak and can cripple a church. However a victim mentality is not the mind-set of spiritual leaders God is using in His church today."

- 1. Am I building God's Word into my heart?** A leader's ability to change and lead others through the change process comes from having a "changeless core." That core is nurtured through values and principles that remain consistent even when the winds of change are blowing. As a Christian leader, that changeless core comes through mediating on God's Word and incorporating God's will into my life.
- 2. Am I becoming protective of my ministry "turf?"** One of the primary tasks of spiritual leaders is to raise up new leaders. If I am becoming indispensable or irreplaceable, it's a sign I am more interested in my future security than in empowering others for ministry.
- 3. Am I evaluating my ministry effectiveness?** Personal evaluation of my ministry along with the criticism of others is necessary to refine any endeavor for God. When I start avoiding an honest critique of my programs or accountability for my actions, I'm choosing comfort over courage.
- 4. Am I "emotionally exciting" in my ministry?** Difficulties can wear us down to the point where "we just don't care anymore." While we all need emotional "rest stops," a prolonged pattern of ministry without passion is a warning signal.
- 5. Am I opting for the familiar over the new?** Am I trying new things, stretching my mind with new thoughts, and building my skills by learning new approaches? Growth comes by seeking outside resources and continual, lifelong learning. Doing what has always been done is comfortable, yet that erodes the impact of my ministry.
- 6. Am I willing to risk failure?** It's most comfortable to attempt only that which will be a sure success. However, flourishing ministries have many "failures" in the pursuit of excellence. I must guard against a false humility that is really nothing more than a mask for insecurity. True change is not risk free.
- 7. Am I associating only with people whose leadership skills are less developed?** We grow by learning from people who are where we need to be in the future--people who are at the point we'd like to be at someday. I'm choosing the comfortable when I must always be the "big fish in a little pond," surrounding myself with people who learn from me rather than stretching me.
- 8. Am I fulfilling the role the church needs, or simply the role I like?** Leaders recognize roles that must be filled in order for an organization to remain healthy and not develop blind spots. A leader must ensure that those roles are in place. A leader seeks to determine what role is needed, and either fills that role personally or encourages another to fill it.
- 9. Am I giving away ministry responsibilities?** Regularly, I should seek to give away some of what I am currently doing and pick up new responsibilities.
- 10. Am I leading with true courage or with a cheap substitute?** I've fought with discouragement those times when my emotional and spiritual batteries desperately need to be charged, but I've also fought dys-couragement, or dysfunctional courage. This sinful counterfeit of courage emerges when I inflate my ego or become insensitive in order to rise above the circumstances of life or the criticism of people.

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