

# **Leadership and Followership**

## **Building up a highly effective team**

### **Introduction**

Team spirit is very essential to a cell church, because the kingdom of heaven treasures relationship. Many churches having transformed into cell churches cannot experience growth. Even though they have got all the materials and established all the structures and followed all the instructions, still there is no growth. Why? It is because they still lack a very important spirit, the team spirit.

Many churches have a very poor relationship among their leaders. When the leaders are blaming one another, accusing one another, criticizing one another, alienating from one another, how can a church have revival? A good team spirit is necessary for a church to be revived. We are determined to build up good teams in the churches, so as to demonstrate that the power of God can break up all the limitations of human cultures. We are citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

How to build up a team? This can be a never-ending lesson of life. Let us share here a few important factors for the building up of a highly effective team:

#### **1. Accept our differences**

Unity does not mean uniformity. We are not casting moulds so as to have everyone being the same. If everyone is the same, there is no need to pursue unity, as they are already one and the same. We need to pursue unity, just because we are all different. God creates each one a unique being. There are no two persons in this world exactly the same.

Our outlooks, styles, habits, characters, backgrounds and interests are all different. These differences do not mean that who is better or worse, but only that we are all unique. As we are one and unique, there cannot be any comparison. You cannot force others to have your style. We have to resist this temptation in order to reduce the pressures upon others.

To borrow an illustration from personology. One day the animal world has made a decision to establish an animal school so as to train up their younger generation to face future challenges. The curriculum includes flying, running, swimming and tree-climbing. For the sake of management, all animals have to get a pass in all four subjects in order to graduate. The duckling is superb in swimming, pretty okay in flying, but is very weak in running. As a remedial, the duckling has to quit swimming so as to make up lessons for running. But it runs so much that its flippers are worn and torn, and at last it fails in swimming, which should be its best item. On the opposite, the bunny is the fast runner in class. But the school has decided that it should learn swimming. Every time when bunny is in the water, it gets choked, and finally it is mentally collapsed. How about the little

squirrel? It is an expert in tree-climbing and can climb up to the tree top in no time. But the teacher requires it to jump and fly up to the tree instead of climbing. Every time when the squirrel jumps up, it falls down from the mid-air to the ground. The teacher forces it to jump and fly until it is exhausted and have muscular cramp, and fails even in tree-climbing and running. The little eagle is very good in flying, but not at all in tree-climbing. The teacher insists that it has to climb up the tree by grabbing the branches, but as it is too heavy, it accidentally falls down from the tree and breaks its wings. Finally it cannot even fly, not to say climbing trees.

This animal school is really freaky! Dear brothers and sisters, do not turn our church into such an animal school. Allow your team members to develop according to their potentials. Do not insist others to imitate you. This is a great temptation; the stronger the leader, the greater the temptation can be. If we require everyone to be the same, we are demolishing the uniqueness of each one, and it can be very boring.

Our differences are a reflection of the wisdom and abundance of our Creator. As we are all unique, we have to respect our differences. Let us develop our characteristics and strengths on an equal basis, and help one another out.

## **2. Forgive one another**

A team has a close relationship. When a team work closely together, inevitably there will be conflicts. Therefore it is a must for team members to learn forgiveness. If we cannot forgive one another, there cannot be any real team work. If a team respects their mutual differences, they would allow each member to exert his influence during the team-working process, without repelling one another. People are weak and imperfect. As there are differences, there will also be conflicts. So this leads us to the second essential element of team building, which is forgiving one another.

Many being hurt by their team members would not admit it, but have bad feeling inside. It is not easy to admit being hurt, as 'being hurt is the mark of the weak.' Admitting being hurt takes frankness and courage. The first step of forgiveness is to face frankly our hurt. Only when you admit of your hurt can God heal you.

When you frankly admit your feeling of hurt and be healed by God, you would not rummage over your old wounds. Husbands and wives often revive their old debts when they quarrel. When they say that they have forgiven, this is only a forgiveness of the mind, but not of the heart. Admitting frankly of our hurt is touching our hearts.

Often our forgiveness is only rational, forgiving verbally, but not from the heart. This is a forgiveness of the mind, but not from the feeling. But hurt is a feeling, and your feeling needs not

be healed. If you do not admit of your hurt and face it squarely, you cannot really forgive a person, and your resentment towards that person cannot be removed.

But it is not enough just to admit of our own hurt. We need to take one more step, which is to determine to forgive the other. Forgiveness is a determination. Yes, I am angry that you have offended me. But my emotion is not my master and cannot make decisions for me. I am determined to forgive you. Forgiveness does not come after the healing of the wound and the passing of the pain. Otherwise, you can never forgive others. On the opposite, you have to determine to forgive and then the feeling of pain can be released.

When you have decided to forgive one other, it does not mean that the pain would not come back. It is not enough to forgive once. If the hurt is deep, the painful feeling would return, and at that time you have to determine again to forgive.

For how many times should we forgive? Lord Jesus says, 'seventy seven times', countless, continuously, until the negative feeling no longer hounds you.

When you are committed to team work, be ready to being hurt. Do not accumulate grievances, as this would create an undercurrent which cannot be hidden. Do forgive, communicate in suitable time, and confessing mutually our sins. Mend our relationship, and do not leave a foothold for Satan to crush the team.

### **3. Obey the leaders**

This is a world upholding leaders. Take a look at the book stores and you will find that among the books on management, most are on leadership, but few on followership.

Many feel that to follow is inferior. In today's society of individualism, less and less would gladly follow. But if there is no one to follow, how can one lead? Followership is a forgotten virtue. The Bible mentions 'to follow' much more than 'to lead'. The litmus test to following Jesus is to follow a leader. This is a test whether we are willing to follow God. To follow God, we have to follow a leader. If we cannot follow a visible leader, we cannot follow an invisible God.

Followership is the key to team work.

To follow is not the same as having no opinion and be a yes-man. It is to allow the leader to make the final decision. When the leader has made the decision, you have to follow the decision even though you may have a different opinion. The decision should be regarded as the guidance of God in that moment, and the team would follow God with the same mind, the same thought, the same strategy, the same voice, and the same action. The power generated by this team work would be

tremendous.

In this individualistic society upholding the self, it is not pleasing to talk about followership. Therefore we have to lay down ourselves. Jesus says to the multitude in Luke 9:23, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'

Following a leader has a three-fold meaning:

A. Have the same spirit with the leader

Moses could not shoulder up his burden alone, and God asked him to select 70 persons to share his burden. (Num 11:16-17) And the 70 elders shared the charisma. Whose charisma? That of Moses! The source of charisma is the Holy Spirit, who anointed Moses, and then Moses shared his charisma to the 70 elders. This is the charisma of Moses, the anointment of Moses by the Holy Spirit. Charisma is imparted from the leader, and the followers have the same spirit with the leader. The charisma imparted becomes a spiritual covering under which the followers can serve. Good service comes from this spiritual covering, and not from our own ability. Without this covering, ministry can be very hard.

It is recorded in 2 Kings 2:9: "When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?' 'Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,' Elisha replied." "Your spirit" is the spirit of Elijah. Elisha yearned for the same spirit of his leader. Why a double portion? Not a double portion of Elijah's power so as to prosper his own ministry, but a double portion of Elijah's spirit and charisma so as to accomplish God's ministry for Elijah. It is a succession, not a ministry owned by the leader alone, but owned mutually. Elisha wanted to acknowledge what Elijah did, and making Elijah's spirit and mission his own. Elijah could not finish up his mission within his life time, but Elisha was taking it up and fulfilling it so as to wipe out the worship of Baal in Israel. This is the fruit of team work.

Following a leader is to have the same spirit and vision with the leader and accomplishing together the same mission. Many people join a church with a hidden agenda and want to exploit the church to achieve his hidden goals, so it is very difficult for them to listen to their leaders. They are only interested in their own things, and it is very difficult for them to have team work with others. Splitting will come sooner or later for them.

New members of a team should not enforce his vision upon his leaders and urge the leader to fulfil what he wants. This would easily break up a team. When you join a team, you are acknowledging the vision of this church, and make this vision your own vision, but not trying to have the church fulfilling your own plan. The leader has been placed by God before you join the team, and God has anointed his vision for the church. This is something that you

should respect and follow. If you are a leader, you would not want to have a new member to side-track you and working against you. Right?

In the process of following, when you discover that you cannot have your vision accomplished here, you should voice it out to see if your vision can be incorporated here. A wise leader would try to include your vision into his own. If things do not work out, then you should leave instead of staying in the same church but trying to do your own business. If you choose to stay behind, you should be loyal to the leader and have the same mind with him.

#### B. Be loyal to the leader before the community

Being loyal is to have the flexibility to adjust your own plan so as to fit into that of the leader. Flexibility is a test of loyalty. A servant should follow the timetable of the master.

2 King 2:1-6 has recorded three times "I will not leave you". This is a commitment to the leader. I have decided to follow you, until God leads us to depart. Can you say to your leader, "I will not leave you, and be loyal to you, serve you, just as Elisha was serving Elijah"?

Servants have to be accountable to the masters. Should we be accountable to the congregation or to the leader? God demands us to be loyal to the leader first, and then the congregation. We should be accountable to the leader, and not to the congregation. Whenever a servant listen to the crowd but not the leader, there would be problems. When Saul listened to the crowd instead of Samuel his spiritual leader, God rejected him as king. When Aaron listened to the crowd and not to Moses, he moulded a golden calf and brought Israel into great sin.

No matter how good a leader is, someone would have grievances against him. At this time you have to protect your leader and his fame, requesting the crowd to respect him. Sometimes the criticism is similar to what your opinion rejected previously by your leader. But when your leader is criticized, do not add oil to the fuel, but to defend the decision of the leader as your own. Obedience is to allow your leader to have the final decision. Once the leader has decided, that is our common decision.

When you are loyal to the crowd more than your leader, there would be division, and it would certainly bring disruptions.

#### C. Learn to follow before learning to lead

Leaders are shaped, and shaping is a process. It is not that once you have a vision then you can work it out immediately. A leader is in fact a servant. When you do not know how to be a

servant when you are under a leader, you will be a boss once you become a leader, and ruling over your followers. Then it would be a curse for those who follow. So before becoming a leader, you should show that you are a loyal follower. Otherwise you cannot be an effective leader. Joshua was loyal in following Moses, Elisha decided not to leave Elijah, David was subservient to Saul, and Jesus was obedient to his parent until the day of his public ministry. Do not presume that you have a greater power and anointment than your leader and hence not following him. You should rather follow and respect him as Elisha was respecting Elijah. Then one day when you lead, people will respect you. You reap what you sow. Nothing great can come when one becomes a leader too soon. Maybe you deem yourself as capable, but in fact it is under the covering of the leader that you can exert yourself well. He has covered up your discrepancies. You may have quite a lot of problems once you work on your own.

What should you do when you have a bad leader? Overthrow him? Disrespect him? Ignore him? By no means! God often uses bad leaders to shape good leaders. David has always served under the authority of Saul. Even in the cave of En-Gedi he respected Saul as the anointed king of God. He was in that mentality until he himself was anointed king more than a decade later. The days of suffering was the process by which David was shaped to be a king delighted to God.

If you can prove yourself loyal, God will raise you up, and no one can hinder this. Do not raise yourself up using your own method. In the process of following, God trains not only our skills, but our spirit and character.

Thus, follow your leader until you can lead on your own. This is not a matter of time, but a matter of quality. Are you a suitable person? Some has waited for ten years, some for three, and some for one. It is not a matter of time, but it depends on whether God has spent enough time on you. When time comes, God will raise you up.

#### **4. Pray for your leaders**

##### **A. Pray with affection**

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!” (Phil 4:1)

Affection is to leave a place in the heart for the others. How? By missing them and thinking of them, then they naturally would have a place in your heart. Think of others especially when you pray.

“I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and

day I constantly remember you in my prayers.” (2 Tim 1:3)

What should be remembered in prayer is not the ministry, but the persons. When the persons are correct, the ministry would be correct. Spare time to remember your teammates. How? When you are riding on a bus, put that person in your heart and allow him to stay in your heart for a while. Ask God: How can I show my love to him? Simple actions can be very powerful, such as: a phone call, a card, a nod, a look... When you do this, the greatest change would be you yourself, your attitude and feeling toward the others. When you feeling changes, the feeling of your counterparts will be changed also. Therefore, actively create a space in your heart for your teammates, leave a space for them. Spare some time every day to allow your teammates to occupy your mind, meditating their goodness and needs, giving thanks or supplications for them.

The main task of a leader is not to leader a good meeting, although this is also important. The most important thing is to put every one of your members in your heart through prayers. If you can do this, you will realize that the spiritual milieu of your team would not be the same, and the affection within your team will flourish.

#### B. Pray with positive attitude

Effective prayers have to be positive.

“We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess 1:2-3)

What should we thank God for? Faith, hope and love, as mentioned in verse 3. This means the good things of that person. When you always think of the goodness of that person, you would surely like him.

Paul’s epistles always begin with thanksgivings, even when he wrote to the Corinthian church. There are still some good things even with the worst people. It depends on your views. Hence when you pray, do not focus on the problems of that person. If you focus on the problems, you will create problematic persons. If you pray for the shy of that person, that person could be even more shy. Pray for an answer to the problem by faith, and give thanks to God for this. What is faith? “Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” (Heb 11:1) That means, not seeing through our physical eyes, but through the eyes of faith, as if the answer has realized. Faith is looking forward, as if that person is already confident. When you pray like this, you will see many miracles happening in the persons you pray for.