

PIONEERING LEADERSHIP: A PROPOSED LEADERSHIP STYLE FOR UN-ENTERED TERRITORIES

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Abstract

Church leadership plays an important role in the growth and expansion of the church. It has been observed that different leadership styles are used to lead and manage the church in territories where the church is well established, however, there are still many places where the Gospel has not penetrated. Perhaps one of the reasons that these territories have not been entered is the fact that the right leadership style is not being implemented. These hard to reach territories generally come with challenges that the established leadership styles often neglect or fear to address. Therefore new leadership strategies should be considered in regard to reaching unentered territories and Pioneering Leadership is a proposed leadership style for the matter at hand.

Keywords: Pioneer, leadership, unentered territories, vision, uncertainty, faith

1. Introduction

When one enters the realm of church leadership, it can be observed that there are a variety of leadership styles that have been studied and analyzed, each seeking to promote methods and strategies for developing better leaders. Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011) have asserted, "The missional church is to be led by missional leadership that focuses on equipping all of God's people for mission" (p. 51). However, when one considers the challenges that leaders have to face in unentered areas such as violent resistance, tribalism, corruption, and syncretism it would be advisable that the established styles of leadership be re-evaluated. By doing so through reflection, discussion, and dialogue it is possible that a more relevant and meaningful style of leadership can be developed for hard to reach areas. A notable example of this was the unorthodox style of leadership used by Hudson Taylor to advance the Gospel in China. Many of the strategies and methods that he used were frowned upon by the established church

leadership, nevertheless, his leadership led to the opening of China to the Gospel.

In the discussion of leadership, it can be observed that having a “clear vision” is often elevated to being one of the most essential components of effective leadership. However, in regards to this well-established notion about vision, Fox (2017, para. 1) notes, “Almost every leadership, strategy and motivation book on the planet advocates the importance of having a crystal clear goal or vision for the future. However, this is an incredibly flawed position to take.” The reason for his argument is the fact that quite often a clear vision of the future is not the reality that many leaders face. This phenomenon has been observed in the world of business and if one looks carefully, the same can also be observed in the hard to reach mission fields. Many a time, leaders do not have a clear vision of how to move forward, but they are still expected to bring results. Without minimizing the importance of vision, as Fox apparently seems to do, it is necessary that we reconsider the best leadership strategies for moving forward in times of uncertainty and inactivity, such as is seen in many unentered and difficult mission fields. In regards to the notion of “vision” in SDA church leadership; the general vision of numerical and spiritual growth may be perfectly clear in the eyes of any given church leader; however, the specific “vision” of the methods and strategies needed to bring about its accomplishment may not be so clear.

In any given organization, there will always be perplexing challenges that call for more than wishful thinking and the expectation that everything will align itself with the ideals of a “visionary” leader without any turbulence. White (1915) states:

The cause of God demands men who can see quickly and act instantaneously at the right time and with power. If you wait to measure every difficulty and balance every perplexity you meet, you will do but little. You will have obstacles and difficulties to encounter at every turn, and you must with firm purpose decide to conquer them, or they will conquer you. (p. 97)

The unexpected challenges and opportunities that are ever present in unentered areas, not to mention the momentous urgency in which the Gospel message is to be proclaimed, calls for a leadership style that is more dynamic than the routine leadership styles that generally characterize the established mission fields. To emphasize the notion that the imitation and replication of routine leadership styles are not highly recommended, Barna (1997) stated, “Today’s climate, from the national down to the neighborhood level, works against the cookie-cutter, predictable, imitative

leaders” (p. 210). In other words, if the church is to penetrate unentered areas there is a need for authentic and innovative leadership.

In regards to the challenge of spreading the Gospel to unentered areas, especially when the task seems to be impossible, Fox (2015, para. 4) notes, “We cannot afford to simply wait for clarity. But at the same time, we cannot set forth a single, clear vision for the future while knowing that the future is infinitely complex and uncertain.” Therefore, to advance the mission it is essential for the church to have leaders that are characterized by an unwavering faith, who are not afraid to take risks, and who have the desire to seek to do more while at the same time inspiring others to also go the extra mile. Such type of leaders are to be distinguished by their trust and reliance on the promises from the Word of God, despite the many uncertainties they face.

Not only are there uncertainties that leaders face when they enter new mission fields, but there is also another major hurdle to overcome namely the cross-cultural tensions that arise when different people groups interact with each other. The fact that the SDA church has a global mission, naturally means that we need to avoid the pitfalls that quite often come with globalization. To support this notion Plueddemann (2009) notes, “But the globalization of the church also presents dangerous possibilities for cross-cultural tensions, especially regarding leadership values. Church leaders must learn to cooperate with people who have radically different assumptions about leadership” (p. 11).

In response to the great need of dynamic leaders to establish the work in unentered places, a unique style of leadership is being proposed which has been coined “Pioneering Leadership.” Pioneering leadership according to Fox (2017, para. 5), “Means leaning into the challenge of progressing through new and uncharted territory.” This is a concept that is being explored, in the world of business, and is proving to be substantial, in that it provides a more realistic view of leadership in places where uncertainty and cross-cultural tensions seem to be prone; and though the church is not a business entity per se, it is in the business of salvation and therefore certain principles from pioneering leadership should not be ignored. Not only that, but there are many biblical principles that can be found in this leadership style.

2. Biblical Foundation of Pioneering Leadership

In regards to leaders in the Bible, Barna (1997) interestingly notes, “The Bible places a great deal more confidence in leaders than it does in the democratic processes of humankind. Some would say that it is a cultural reality of the biblical era, a time when dictators—either destructive or benevolent in nature—ruled the world” (p. 199). It is evident that ancient and modern leadership styles will vary to a certain degree, but when one looks at the concept of pioneering leadership, which has been defined as “leaning into the challenge of progressing through new and uncharted territory,” it can be observed that many narratives of the Bible, such as the narratives of Abraham, Moses, Nehemiah, Jesus, and the early church strongly support the notion that pioneering leadership is a practical leadership style that has the potential to rapidly advance the mission of the church.

Perhaps one of the greatest examples to demonstrate this concept is the Abrahamic narrative. The Scriptures state, “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8). Within this passage, it is clearly seen that Abraham, who is also referred to as the father of faith, was called to take on a leadership role in which he was to lead the covenant family with the chief objective of becoming a blessing and causing “all families of the earth” to be blessed, in Christ. He accepts the call and takes on this responsibility by faith not having the slightest “vision” as to how this is to be accomplished but yet still he pushes forward and ventures into the unknown realms of Canaan finding unexpected trials, challenges, and cultural tensions.

In regards to the reason why Abraham was chosen to fill such a position and become a pioneer-leader is based on one peculiar characteristic. The Scriptures state, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” (Genesis 18:19). From this passage, it appears that Abraham’s passion for training and equipping others is given more recognition than his clearly established vision of what he was to do in the land of Canaan. In volume two of the SDA Bible Commentary White (1953) states, “The ministers of Christ are to be examples to the flock. He who fails to direct his own household, is not

qualified to guide the church of God" (p. 1009). Therefore, it appears that God is more concerned with us leading our families, sharing the light that we have with others, and training them to be responsible with that light, than having a systematic leadership strategy based on a leader's clear vision. To support this notion, Esmond (2013) notes, "But if you are a Christian, you are a leader. Part of our leadership responsibility is to use our influence to lead others to follow and trust Jesus," (p. 11) and the scripture notes "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going" (Heb 11:8). This suggests that obedience and faith are the most important characteristics for a pioneer leader to have and they were the main reasons behind Abraham being chosen as the pioneer leader of the people of God.

Another example of pioneering leadership can be found in the life of Moses. Hebrew 11:24-26 states, "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." In the Mosaic narrative, it can also be observed that Moses did not have a clear "vision," in that he learned as he went along as opposed to having a systematic plan of action. In other words he was not fully aware of what his leadership role and responsibilities would entail, both prior to his flight into the Midian desert and after his call from God at the burning bush, but Scripture notes that he (Moses) had a passionate desire to be with God's people and he esteemed reproach for Christ's sake better than worldly treasure (Heb 11:26). This also coincides with the concept of pioneering leadership in that it does not base itself on specified plans and strategies, but is fuelled by a radical faith that looks beyond all odds and moves forward into uncertainty with faith and the command of God to go as the only anchor.

Another notable illustration of pioneering leadership is found in the life and ministry of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah learned that those who remained in Judah were riled with hardships and that the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins, he using the influence that he had as the king's cupbearer took the risk of asking permission to go and rebuild the city. In doing so Nehemiah takes on the role of being a pioneer leader for the repatriation of the Hebrew exiles. His pioneering leadership was characterized by the fact that he was willing to take the risk and ask the king for permission to return to his homeland, which according to the reports were almost uninhabitable (Neh 1:3). He takes the risk of losing his job and enters into what seems to be an insurmountable task simply

because of the faith that he had in the promise of God. While many other Jews had been content in dwelling in the land of their captivity, Nehemiah decided to take a step into the unknown and with the help of God and those who were inspired by his influence, Nehemiah was able to fill the role of being a true pioneer leader. To reiterate some of the pioneering characteristics, White states (1925), "The holy energy and high hope of Nehemiah were communicated to the people. As they caught the spirit, they rose for a time to the moral level of their leader. Each, in his own sphere, was a sort of Nehemiah; and each strengthened and upheld his brother in the work" (p. 175).

Perhaps the most important Biblical character to consider in regards to the concept of pioneering leadership is Jesus Christ. Although He is all knowing, the fact that He also became human should be taken into serious consideration. It is evident from the Scriptures that He is the one that pioneered the plan of saving mankind and He took the risk of losing all heaven for humanity's sake. This is clearly demonstrated in Matt 26:39 where Jesus stated, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as you will." To support the notion that it was unwavering faith and trust in God as opposed to a clear vision of victory that led Jesus to yield His life for our sins is reflected in the words of Ellen White (1898) where she stated,

The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that their separation was to be eternal. (p. 753)

Not only was He the Pioneer of all true Christian pioneer leaders but he trained and influenced His disciples to also become pioneer leaders. Perhaps the most valid example of this concept is the fact is that after training them, He sent them, two by two, into towns of which they knew very little of, with the task of visiting, healing, and preaching the Gospel to the town's inhabitants. The fact that they were to go by themselves and establish relationships in unentered areas testifies to the fact that they were indeed pioneers of unentered areas.

Lastly, the early church demonstrated pioneer leadership in almost everything that they did, Peter boldly preaching in Jerusalem (Acts 2), Philip going to Samaria and then later baptizing the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8), and Paul establishing churches wherever he went. The early church was not only called to build up the kingdom of God amongst their own Jewish brethren, but they were called to be pioneer church leaders of the unentered mission fields of the world. Concerning the Apostle Peter's

leadership, Ellen White (1903) referred to him as, "Peter, the pioneer in breaking through the barriers of ages, and teaching the heathen world" (p. 86). In regards to Timothy, Ellen White (1911) states, "Among those who had been converted at Lystra, and who were eyewitnesses of the sufferings of Paul, was one who was afterward to become a prominent worker for Christ and who was to share with the apostle the trials and the joys of pioneer service in difficult fields" (p. 184).

3. Pioneering Leadership and the Spirit of Prophecy

Not only is Pioneering Leadership hinted and supported by the Holy Scriptures, but the writings of Ellen G. White (i.e. the Spirit of Prophecy), also reinforces the concept of Pioneering leadership. When one studies the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church, it can be readily observed that it was established by a pioneering leadership style. In other words, the early pioneers of the SDA Church did not know the extent of where God was leading the movement but simply obeyed with the faith that God was in charge. Ellen White herself being among the pioneers, also greatly saw the need of pioneer leaders in new fields of labor and she (1905) stated that, "Over and over again the Lord has presented before me the pioneer work that must be done in new territory. When a difficult field is presented before me as one that must receive special attention. I understand that it is my duty to make this field my special burden, until, before the earnest, continuous efforts put forth, the difficulties disappear, and the work is established" (RH Sept. 28, 1905). A statement such as this not only not only argues in favor of the concept of pioneering leadership but also places a divine mandate upon it. It is evident that for the work to spread into new areas, pioneers are needed and the role that they play is intricately connected with the leadership and management function. It is also interesting to note the burden that she had for this method of advancing the work of God, not to mention the fact that she asserted that this was a part of God's great plan. White (1915) declares, "Has he not shown that it is to be a pioneer to go forth to the people, laden with the precious treasures of truth?" (p. 353).

Concerning how pioneers are to prepare themselves for the responsibility of pioneering leadership, White (1909, para. 3) writes "They must have such a training as will fit them for acceptable service if they are called to do pioneer work in mission fields either in America or in foreign countries." She notes that those who aspire to become, or have been called

to serve as pioneering leaders should not be ignorant or unskilled. Contrariwise, they were to be fit to serve, or in other words were to undergo training and preparation. White (1946) also encouraged pioneer leaders to, "Follow the example of those who have done pioneer work in new fields. Wisely work in places where you can best labor" (p. 50). Here we can find a principle that should not be overlooked when entering the discussion of pioneering leadership, namely that pioneers should be trained, and quite often that training comes from following the example of previous pioneers. Such a principle is supported both by the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

When one looks deeper into the concept of pioneering leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it can be observed that there are three major avenues that the church uses to advance its objective of fulfilling the great commission of taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Those three major avenues are education, health, and the establishment of churches. Relief and community service could also be said to be a fourth avenue that is used to communicate the Gospel message but in most instances, relief and community service are in one way or another connected to the three main avenues. In regards to these three avenues Ellen White (1990) states, "He (God) desires every pioneer worker to stand in his lot and place, that he may do his part in saving the people from being swept downward to destruction by the mighty current of evil — of physical, mental, and spiritual declension" (p. 226). Here she mentions physical, mental, and spiritual declension which ideally are counteracted by the establishment of centers of health, learning, and worship. It is evident that such establishments do not come by chance, but result from the dedication of faithful pioneer leaders that are willing to take the risks involved with establishing such endeavors.

White (1912) while discussing about a certain pioneer worker states, "Let him encourage others to unite with him in pioneer work, planning with them to open new fields successfully and to erect humble church and school buildings. In teaching others to do what he has done, he will be engaged in an educational work of the highest value" (p. 70). The connection of pioneer work and the establishment of schools and churches have an intricate relationship, which should not be neglected by those who aspire to advance the work of spreading the Gospel. One could only imagine the faith and works necessary for establishing educational institutions and churches in those days, but nevertheless, brave and diligent pioneer leaders advanced the cause and marvelous things were wrought within the developing stages of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Concerning the issue of Battle Creek College, White (1903) stated, "In this pioneer effort our brethren advanced, not inch by inch, but in

sweeping strides, in the right direction. Some advised delay in the work; some criticized and condemned; many gave a hearty support, and God blessed the efforts of the united band of workers" (1903, par. 5).

Equally important as pioneer leaders establishing schools and churches, is the need for the establishment of centers that promote physical health and wellness. In regards to pioneering medical missions, White (1933) asserts, "Medical missionary work brings to humanity the gospel of release from suffering. It is the pioneerwork of the gospel. It is the gospel practiced, the compassion of Christ revealed" (p. 239). White does not separate this work from the educational aspect of the pioneer work, but she urges, "Students should be prepared for pioneer missionary work. The medical missionaries who are sent to foreign countries should first receive a most careful education. They are Christ's ambassadors, and they are to work for Him with all the skill they have, praying fervently that the great Physician will pity and save by His miraculous power" (p. 518). Lastly, in regards to pioneering work in the medical missionary lines, she (1915) notes, "Medical missionary evangelists will be able to do excellent pioneer work. The work of the minister should blend fully with that of the medical missionary evangelist" (p. 360).

Not only did Ellen White emphasize the need of pioneer workers and leaders, and the great success that comes from their diligent effort, but she also clearly makes it known that pioneering leadership is not an easy task and that many challenges come along with it. It is with this understanding pioneer leaders are to enter their spheres of service. To elaborate more on this, White (1902) notes, "Those who have not broken the ground in new and difficult fields do not realize the difficulties of pioneer work" (p. 242). Perhaps one of the most notable of those difficulties is that of finance and monetary issues. The pioneer leader should not be taken by surprise when they come to find out that money and finances are a challenge. White notes that even secular business enterprises also face similar struggles and therefore the pioneer leaders should not be taken off guard. To re-emphasize this statement, Ellen White (1905) states, "When, in ordinary business, pioneer work is done, and preparation is made for future development, there is frequently a financial loss" (p. 1).

Despite the many challenges that pioneering leadership may have, the benefits are to be counted as of eternal worth. The advancement of the Gospel in unreached areas is dependent upon pioneering leaders who are filled with the Holy Spirit and the love and grace of Jesus Christ. The writings of Ellen White, though never using the terminology of "Pioneering Leadership," gives undisputable evidence for the importance of such a

leadership style to aid the church in accomplishing its mission of spreading the Gospel to the world. Lastly, in regards to the importance of pioneering leadership Ellen White (1908) stated, "Thus the missionary pioneer will open many a door for service; and the presence with him of the great Missionary, and the power which He bestows, will be constantly enlarging the worker's sphere of usefulness," and (White, 1946) "We rejoice that the efforts put forth by the pioneer workers among foreign nationalities in the United States and Canada have borne a rich harvest of souls" (p. 571).

4. The Theoretical Foundation of Pioneering Leadership

Pioneering leadership is a leadership style that according to Fox (2017, para. 5), "enables the exploration, development, learning, and progress through the complexity and paradox of an uncertain future." Its primary characteristic is the pioneering spirit which braves the challenge of entering new and unfamiliar areas. Not only that, but it establishes itself on the notion that good leaders should always be exploring possibilities that can lead to future growth and development. It does not wait for the uncertain future to determine its success or failure, but moves forward with a courageous faith accompanied with diligent effort and enters into the uncharted seas of uncertainty with the determination to come forth with more productive and relevant methods of achieving their objectives.

Fox (2017, para. 9) also notes that "Embracing this type of pioneering leadership means embracing several paradoxical notions." The paradoxical notions that he refers to are three, the first of which is, "To gain certainty, we must embrace uncertainty," the second being, "To build conviction, we must embrace doubt," and lastly, "To make progress, we must avoid success." It should be noted that Fox discusses pioneering leadership within the realms of business enterprise, but correlations and principles can be drawn that can positively contribute to leadership within the church, given that biblical principles are not neglected. In regards to the paradox, Plueddemann (2009) notes, "Most of us aren't comfortable with paradox, because paradox threatens both positions. Yet scripture supports the argument for both trusting and planning, for resting and striving, for strategizing while trusting that God is in charge of the outcome" (p 135). Concerning Fox's first paradoxical notion, it is evident that with very few exceptions, that the future is uncertain. Due to this uncontrollable phenomena, conventional leaders tend to stay in their comfort zone and for the most part, avoid all risks, and try to ensure that their lives, ministry,

businesses, etc. are as secure as possible, thus ascertaining their future prosperity. However, with the pioneer leader, it is not so. The pioneer leader is not afraid to take calculated risks and is comfortable outside of his or her comfort zone. Concerning embracing uncertainty, Fox (2017, para. 10) notes, "You don't wait for clarity or perfect plans before acting. Rather, you progress into uncertainty with adaptability and risk mastery, learning along the way." It is such a leadership spirit that is necessary for the Gospel to advance to the unreached people groups of the world.

The concept of embracing of doubt to build conviction, at first glance, may seem to be inconsistent with scripture. However, while doubt is definitely not an attribute that the Bible endorses, the main principle behind Fox's paradoxical statement about "doubt" is that pioneering leaders should not trust themselves that they know enough to navigate their way through a new territory, and should, therefore, seek to learn as much as possible so that they will be certain about what they are doing. In other words, they should doubt themselves. To elaborate more, Fox (2017, para. 11) notes, "Whereas some might claim to have all of the right answers, pioneering leaders instead value asking the right questions."

Lastly, concerning the avoidance of success to make progress, the pioneering leader is never satisfied with a victory, because they know that the battle still continues and that there will always be more opportunities for growth, learning, and development, not to mention that there will always be a need to stay relevant.

Christine Caine, unlike Fox who focuses primarily on the business aspect of pioneering leadership, brings new insights into the discussion that are more beneficial to the subject of pioneering leadership in the church. She states, "A pioneer leader is the opposite of a settler—someone who is "sedentary, stationary, maintaining." I learned early on in our ministry, that we weren't called to a "maintenance ministry," but to a pioneering organization, and we have seen that develop in every initiative over the years," (2017, para. 7). Taking into consideration that pioneers, in essence, are the first ones to open or prepare the way for others, it is only logical that pioneer leadership is of key significance to the growth and development of the church. To elaborate more on the role of pioneering leaders in the church, Caine (2017, para. 8) states, "I realize that maintaining systems and procedures is necessary—and always will be—but I know the Spirit of God wants us simultaneously looking for how we can pioneer development and growth for the future personally and corporately. He wants the pioneering spirit of leadership alive in every one of us. As you influence others—at home, at work and in your community, intentionally

develop pioneering leadership qualities.”

Caine (2017) has also identified that there are six major characteristics of pioneer leaders. The first, and perhaps most evident characteristic is the fact that they are self-starters. This means that they do not wait for others to motivate or persuade them into action but they take the burden of moving forward upon themselves and enter into new spheres of service or enterprise. Self-starting pioneers recognize that they are workers for God and that they should work with all their heart for His name and His cause. The second characteristic of pioneer leaders is that they are intrinsically motivated, meaning that their motivation comes from within as opposed to being motivated by external rewards or remuneration. The pioneer church leader sees their reward as more than just the benefits that they receive from being a denominational worker, but ultimately looks for the inheritance that the Lord will give them when He comes in glory with all of His angels.

Thirdly, the pioneering leader is characterized by the ability to gather people for a worthy cause and inspire and motivate them into action. Though pioneering leaders are self-starters, they are also capable of making people aware of what they have started and of gaining the needed support to bring to completion their pioneering efforts. Another notable feature that pioneer leaders have is their persistence and commitment. Pioneer leaders do not give up easily and are devoted to their cause, which in the case of pioneering church leaders, is building up the kingdom of God. Pioneering leaders do not allow difficulties or obstacles to side-track them from achieving their objective.

Pioneering leaders are also innovative and imaginative. They are critical thinkers and consider a vast variety of methods and approaches to achieve their goals and objectives. They are characterized by “thinking out of the box,” for their originality, and for the advanced ways in which they address the challenges that they face. Lastly, pioneer leaders are bridge builders. Not only are they bridge builders but they break down barriers of enmity and separation. They are individuals who bring people together with the purpose of seeing them thrive and survive and work together for the common good of all.

In regards to the positive attributes of pioneer leadership, Sugerman, Scullard, and Wilhelm (2011) have pointed out some of the major strengths that pioneer leaders have. First of all, they are successful at bringing about change, meaning that they have the ability to enter an environment or situation, which does not seem promising and make changes that others deemed impossible. They also have the tendency of trusting their intuition

or “gut-feeling,” which in the realm of Christian Pioneer leaders, would better be expressed in the terms of trusting firmly in that “still small voice” that impresses them to move forward in faith. As mentioned before, they are also inspiring, influential, and able to unite or bring people together to achieve their goals.

Another noteworthy strength of pioneering leaders is the fact that they are not afraid to try new things. This is perhaps one of the greatest differences between the pioneer and conventional leader. The pioneer church leader recognizes that what worked in the past does not necessarily work in the present and yet they refuse to compromise or syncretize timeless and absolute principles. Pioneering leaders are also comfortable with taking the lead, or in other words, they are internally motivated and are able to be at peace with themselves despite the opposition that they may face. They also are good at setting personal and group goals and are able to motivate themselves and others to fulfill those goals. Lastly, pioneering leaders are not afraid to take risks.

5. Management and Cultural Considerations for Pioneering Leadership

Pioneering leadership is not only going ahead of others and taking the risk of venturing into uncharted regions, but it also entails the management of the work established in those regions. In regards to the management function, Yamamori (1996) has noted that “one of management’s task is to confront chaos and confusion wherever it is found through effective organization. Restoring order to our national, institutional, community, family and personal affairs is a number one priority” (p. 156). Therefore pioneering leaders have to face the twofold task of leading and managing their pioneering efforts, and as chance would have it, this task always takes place in the midst of the prevailing culture and worldview of the local people. Elliston (1992) has also noted that, “Leadership is nearly always closely tied to a local cultural model. Without this close association the Christian distinctives are often compromised” (p. 11).

When one observes the numerous cultures that exist in unentered regions (especially those in the 10/40 window of North Africa and Asia), it can be clearly seen that leadership in most, if not all, people groups follow a leadership culture that is different from that of Western countries. This presents a great challenge for those who are not familiar with the culture and worldview of the people. In regards to equipping those that do have an understanding of the culture, with knowledge to help them manage

their leadership responsibilities, Yamamori (1996) notes, "Most of the management knowledge available to Christian leaders and workers today comes from business-oriented, western theoretical formulations as well as institutional traditions; culture; the experience of great managers and so on" (p. 149). This knowledge is often irrelevant and does not help the church to advance in its mission. Not only that, but much time and resources are spent on gaining such knowledge and the majority of it is buried and lost sight of not long after those who received it return to their posts and positions of duty. To elaborate more on this phenomenon, Yamamori (1996) has stated, "There is always a danger in development ministries of importing overseas methods and technologies that are alien and create highly artificial and nonsustainable "development" which must perpetually depend on outside facilitators and resources to avoid crumbling" (p. 205). There are many challenges that unentered areas face such as marital practices, superstitions, harmful traditional practices, health issues, spiritual warfare, communal worldviews, religious persecution and stigmatization that are often times unaddressed in "ministerial" training. To go a step further, Elliston (2000) states, "Without significant change, traditional seminaries will not be able to meet the leadership development needs of churches in the next century...The traditional western worldview dominance is being powerfully challenged" (p.143).

It is for these reasons that pioneering leadership should be given serious consideration because pioneering leadership in the church seeks to establish new and relevant methods of leadership and management in the unentered mission fields of the world. In regards to seeking those who can best fill the role of being pioneer leaders, Luecke (1990) gives some helpful advice, "To begin a new building emphasis in church leadership look first for plants. These are members who are ready for themselves and the church to grow into something different. They will most likely catch and shape a vision for mission easily and model the momentum that can bring others along" (p. 149). From this statement, an important principle can be formulated, namely that those who take on the role of pioneering leadership in the church need to have an intense desire for both personal and church growth.

This desire, however, may be met by opposition from the prevailing church culture of inactivity and negativity that characterizes many church members. This phenomenon can be observed in all church denominations, not excluding the SDA church and of this problem, Elliston (1992) reports, "Passivity among church members too often is both encouraged and taught by the existing leaders. Pastors, elders, deacons, worship leaders, ushers,

and others are too often jealous of their position and status” (p. 171). Therefore pioneering leaders need to be aware of this challenge so as to avoid discouragement. They should also remember that when they enter into new territories and take on pioneering roles of leadership, they will have a new environment and fresh minds to work with, that have not developed the negative passivity that characterizes many in the existing congregations that have lost their zeal for outreach and mission. In the same line of thought, Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011) stated that “It has often been observed that starting a new congregation with a missional imagination and posture is easier than reorienting existing ones. This is so in part because the process of planting a new church is inherently missiological and open ended” (p. 161).

When one observes the cultures of the people groups of unentered areas, a common characteristic is the fact that most of them are community centered and revolve around the idea of belonging to a certain tribe, community, or family. Therefore, for one to be a pioneer leader, they should first be accepted and respected by those living in the community. To strengthen this notion, Elliston (2000) wrote, “For a person to emerge as a leader in a community, he/she must be seen by that community to be trustworthy and competent. The task of the person who is facilitating the development of another person as a leader will focus the skill, knowledge, and character development in ways which will relationally empower him/her in that setting” (p. 248). Luecke (1990) also gives another useful piece of advice to pioneering leaders, especially in the context of unreached areas, when he asserts, “Be sure that individual leaders and groups reach out to find and recognize what is perhaps more noble, admirable and excellent than what a church fellowship is currently doing. That is how the joy of new worthwhile endeavors begins and expands” (p. 167).

5. Conclusion

As it has been discussed, church leadership plays a crucial role in the advancement of the Gospel and in regards to the mission of reaching unentered territories it is essential that we as a church seek to promote and equip leaders that will be most effective in this great and seemingly insurmountable task. Therefore, this study has concluded that pioneering leadership, is a leadership style that dives boldly into the challenge of advancing into new un-entered territories despite the many challenges and uncertainties that may be faced. It is a leadership style that is characterized by an Abrahamic like faith in going where God sends and Christ-like compassion for souls that are perishing. Its principles are not only founded

in the Scriptures and supported by the Spirit of Prophecy but are also proving to be beneficial in the realms of business and other growth-oriented organizations. In order to accomplish the mission of preaching the Everlasting Gospel in the context of the Three Angels Message to every kindred, tongue, and tribe on the earth, the church needs leaders who aim is not merely to settle but to be pioneers who continue moving until the mission is accomplished. In other words, the church needs pioneer leaders because “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few” (Luke 10:2). May God be exalted!

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