

Bible School Administration

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Unit 1 Assignment

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

EDU5053

Bible School Administration

Caribbean School of Theology

September 2017

Introduction

Recognizing the importance of Bible schools for equipping church leaders is crucial. However, many questions arise as to program development and curriculum planning of schools. In this context, preparing students to be critical thinkers is one of the important aspects of preparing Christian leadership. This essay is three-fold in purpose. It is my endeavor within a Bible school context to describe what is meant by a philosophy of administration, explain why the servant-leadership concept is foundational within that context, and share what I have gained from various readings concerning the biblical approach to Christian leadership as contrasted to secular leadership.

The Meaning of a Philosophy of Administration in a Bible School

Before commencing any description of the concept as it relates to administration in a Bible school, it is important to define the word philosophy. Philosophy is defined in the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1991) as the “study of things and their causes” as well as positing that a philosopher from the Greek perspective is a “lover of wisdom” (675). This is helpful to understanding the applicability of the concept of philosophy from the perspective of Daniel Seymour (1993): “The leadership of an organization must by word and deed, convey the message that customer satisfaction, through a process of continually improving quality, is the responsibility of every member of the organization” (5). Also, a review of Maehr, Midgley, and Urdan’s article in cooperates the idea of leadership-motivation which keeps leadership focused on quality education (1992, 410). While the preceding definitions are good snapshots of the philosophy of administration, I agree with Steve Durasoff (2008) who suggest based on Matthew 20:25–28 that Jesus demonstrated administration at its best by merging leadership with a servant heart (15). Viewed from a biblical perspective,

administration is clearly defined as “the guidance, leadership, and quality control of the efforts of a group of individuals toward some common goal” (Durasoff 2008, 13). His conclusions are influenced by the Apostle Paul’s writings in 1 Corinthians 12:28. He identifies the Greek origin of administration as “*kubernesis*, denoting a helmsman, a ship’s master.” Further, he sees a nexus between this word and Proverbs 1:5; 11:14; and 24:6 (translated “guidance”), and it is used in Acts 27:11 (“pilot”) and Revelation 18:17” (15). The meaning of this concept is further deepened as Ordway Tead’s definition of administration is laid out by Kenneth Gangel (1997) stating that “administration is the direction of people in association to achieve some goal temporarily shared” and “the inclusive process of integrating human effort so that a desired result is obtained” (95–96).

It is important to note that the common thread that runs through all the definitions tendered so far is the notion of a collective or team approach to goal attainment or problem-solving. Subliminally, therefore, as one continues to probe the import of a philosophy of administration in a Bible school, it is apparent that the preferred structure is radically different from the traditional secular management hierarchy. This poses serious challenges for many pastors seeking to administer in a Christian education context. Myron Rush (1994) laments, “Unfortunately, the secular management philosophy is often both humanistic and materialistic. Authority and power are seen as a means of manipulating, using, and controlling people.” The problem is further compounded when one considers that “Most pastors have not been trained to manage a large, dynamic organization” (9).

Though an eye opener, I agree with Durasoff (2008, 14) who posits:

The traditional, scientific administration theory has been termed irrelevant because it emphasizes facts and excludes values. Some leaders in higher education present this scientific management approach as one concerned with the measurement of work. It assumes that people are machine like and their feelings,

personality, and work group are relatively unimportant. The worker as a human being is ignored. Bible school administrators need to demonstrate the ethic of caring and willingness to serve others. They must encourage subordinates in such a way as to release their creativity and motivate them to accomplish the goals of the college.

To crystallize the embodiment of the philosophy of administration in a Bible school, one of necessity must view the submission of Alton Smith (1991). Smith articulates “Management of Bible schools is the process by which the church accomplishes its collective goals through the church’s Bible schools. The foundation of Bible school management includes its ethics, its vital functions and its focal point” (161).

Foundational Nature of Servant-Leadership in Bible School Administration

It is reasonable to conclude that the primary purpose of offering training at the Bible school level is to prepare Christian workers and leaders for service. However, therein lays the dilemma which is succinctly described by Rush (1984):

Currently most leaders in Christian organizations are receiving the bulk of their management training from the secular business community. This means many Christian leaders are attempting to manage God’s work using a secular philosophy that has been condemned by God. The world uses power and authority to ‘lord it over’ people in an effort to get work done. The Bible teaches that authority is to be used to serve the needs of others. (17)

In this regard, Jesus sets the standard. In Matthew 20:25–28 and Mark 10:35–45, Jesus establishes the critical function of servant-leadership as the preferred style for those who aspire to work in establishing the kingdom of God in the heart and lives of men. Don Page (1998, 108), essentially makes the same point declaring that “the creation mandate continued but there was a second mandate added by Christ. A redeemed community of believers was to be built on this servanthood model of leadership to advance the Great Commission.”

Two powerful metaphors used to describe New Testament servant-leadership are

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shepherd (John 10:11–14) and servant (Matt. 20:25–28). Since the Bible school teaches the

Word of God, the administration should practice biblical servanthood-leadership principles.

Jesus, after all, taught these time-tested principles. They should form the core of an institute's

leadership. Other leadership principles, however well-intentioned, should not be substituted. I

fully endorse the following statement: "If the Christian enterprise is to accomplish the tasks for

which God has raised it up, its leadership must apply the principles of management outlined in

God's Word instead of those promoted and practiced by the secular world" (Rush 1984, 14).

The Biblical Approach to Christian Leadership as Contrasted to Secular Leadership

The context of this course demands close examination of the nature and orientation of these two types of leadership. Such an analysis of Oswald Sanders's work on Natural and Spiritual leadership is classically illustrated by Don Page (1994, 130).

Natural Leadership	Spiritual Leadership
Self-confident	Confident in God
Knows men	Also knows God
Makes own decisions	Seeks to find God's Will
Ambitious	Self-effacing
Originates own methods	Finds/Follows God's method
Enjoys commanding others	Delight to obey God
Motivation: personal considerations	Motivation: love to obey God
Independent	God-dependent

An examination of the characteristics of the leaders in the above matrix reveals that the word "God" was mentioned seven times under the spiritual leader. The crux of the

matter is that any institution built for the promulgation of the Word of God must be administered by a “God” man.

Jesus conducted a powerful ‘closed door’ seminar for his disciples according to Luke 22:24–27, defining for them how to recognize greatness. Gangel (1997) emphasizes that “New Testament Leadership is not a political power play . . . is not authoritarian attitude . . . and is not cultic control” (69–71). He further postulated that “New Testament Leader is Nurture . . . Example . . . and, Fatherhood” (73–75).

Conclusion

The conclusion of the matter, therefore, is the fact that no Bible school can effectively and efficiently execute its duties and responsibilities without having a philosophical base that is rooted in the Word of God. The focal position in the institution, the principal, is required to display a high level of magnanimity which can only be made manifest as a servant leader. Following the path delineated by Jesus, the principal and teachers of the Bible school must recognize that first and foremost they need to model the attitude of a trusted servant or follower of the Lord, seeking the best for their charges and not lording over them. When these principles become entrenched in the philosophy of the Bible school administration, the institution is bound to please God and ultimately succeed in its mandate.

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