

PENTECOSTAL LEADERSHIP

DISCERNMENT AND PEER ACCOUNTABILITY

DANIEL TOMBERLIN, D. MIN.

© 2012

When Apostle Paul offered his farewell address to the church at Ephesus he offered a paradigm for leadership in the church. Throughout his farewell address, Paul's words reflect three years of diverse conflict as he served the church. Paul's time at Ephesus was marked with tears. His straightforward declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ provoked conflict. The sources of conflict were "the plots of the Jews," "savage wolves" from outside the assembly, and leaders within the church that will arise to speak "perverse things" in an effort to divide the church. As Paul takes leave of these believers, he warns them of continuing conflict and urges them to "be on guard" and "be on the alert." Paul declares that "the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me." Conflict cannot be avoided. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit that is guiding him from conflict to conflict. The goal of Paul's ministry is to "build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."¹

God has called and equipped elders and bishops to lead the church through diverse types of conflict for the sake of the sanctification of God's people. In order to fulfill this mission Pentecostal leadership models must be developed that recognize toxic leadership and promote sanctified leaders. Pentecostal leadership should reflect authentic Spirit-empowered leadership that will promote the mission of Jesus Christ by discerning toxic leadership tendencies and provide for peer accountability in an effort to guard against conflict caused by toxic leadership.

CONFLICT

A theological definition of conflict is the absence of *shālôm*. The Hebrew word *shalom* refers to the overall welfare of the human soul.² *Shālôm* means to be complete, or whole; to be safe; to be in good health; to prosper; to live and die in tranquility. In matters of human community, *shālôm* refers to friendship and peacemaking. In relationship to God,

¹Acts 20:18-32, *New American Standard Bible*, (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

² The word *soul* should not be understood in terms of Greek metaphysics, i.e., as the spiritual component of human being. Rather, the Hebrew concept of *soul* is best understood as *life*, i.e., human as inseparable body and spirit which *lives*.

shālôm refers to the salvific covenant between God and humanity.³ When the apostolic authors of the New Testament spoke of *peace* they used the word to reflect its usage in the Septuagint, which corresponds to the Hebrew *shālôm*.⁴ Jesus Christ is the “Prince of Peace” and his disciples are called to be peacemakers.⁵ Throughout the New Testament, the apostolic greetings and benedictions speak of the blessing of peace.⁶

Even so, the church is a community in conflict. The church is comprised of male and female, rich and poor, of every tribe and tongue,⁷ all of whom are too often motivated by self-interest. The church is a community that lives in the tension between two ages: the present age which is corrupted by conflict and violence; and the age to come in which death, war, mourning, and pain have been overcome by the *shālôm* of God.⁸ Jesus confirmed this tension when he said, “. . . My peace I give to you. . .” but “. . . in the world you have tribulation.”⁹ Paul recognized that all humans are conflicted between good and evil, that is, the flesh verses the spirit. Those who are fleshly are full of “jealously and strife.” The result is schism.¹⁰ Those who are spiritual are charged with the restoration and sanctification of the church.¹¹

TOXIC LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Conflict and spiritual abuse is often caused by toxic leaders within the church. Jean Lipman-Blumen defines toxic leaders as

“those individuals, who by dint of their destructive behaviors and dysfunctional personal qualities generate a serious and enduring poisonous effect on the individuals, families, organizations, communities, and even entire societies they lead. . . . Intentional toxic leaders deliberately harm others or enhance themselves at others’ expense, while unintentional toxic leaders nonetheless cause serious harm by careless or reckless behavior, as well as by their incompetence.”¹²

³*The Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament* s. v. “שָׁלוֹם”

⁴*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* s. v. “εἰρήνη”

⁵ Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 5:9

⁶ Luke 24:36; John 20:21; Romans 1:7; 16:20; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; 13:11; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; 6:23; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 3; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2; 3:14; 2 John 3; 3 John 15; Jude 2; Revelation 1:4

⁷ Galatians 3:28; James 2:2-4; Revelation 7:9

⁸ Romans 3:10-18; Isaiah 2:4; 11:6; 65:25; Revelation 21:4

⁹ John 14:27; 16:33

¹⁰ Romans 7:15-24; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4

¹¹ Galatians 6:1; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 4:11-16

¹² Jean Lipman-Blumen, “Toxic Leadership: When Grand Illusions Masquerade as Noble Visions.” *Leader to Leader* (Spring 2005), 1. [Internet: Accessed on October 4, 2012].

The Scriptures refer to toxic leaders as false-prophets, false-christs, false-apostles, false-teachers, and antichrists.¹³ Jesus warned the church to beware of the false-christs.¹⁴ The false-christs are eschatological figures, god-like leaders that operate with charismatic power and miracles in order to deceive the disciples of Jesus Christ.¹⁵ The false-christs correspond to the antichrists of the Johannine epistles. The antichrists are “already in the world” seeking to deceive the world by denying the incarnation of Jesus Christ.¹⁶ Likewise, Jesus warned the church to beware of the false-prophets “who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”¹⁷ The false-prophets exorcised demons and performed miracles in His name, but were nonetheless lawless and apostate.¹⁸ The charismatic signs of the false-prophet serve to deceive the elect of God by misdirecting the follower so that the lawlessness of the false prophet is ignored. Too often, charismatic toxic leaders, and their followers, become convinced that the rules don’t apply to them. This may be demonstrated in the successful pastor who believes that he (or she) is above local board accountability, denominational polity, or even the moral laws of Scripture. Charismatic powers and success are the sole proof of divine authority. Because divine authority is assumed, the toxic charismatic leader has the authority to challenge the Scriptures and the Great Tradition of the church, often leading to heresy and schism.

Jesus rebuked the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira because they tolerated false-teachers and false-prophets that deceived the church and led believers into immorality.¹⁹ The lawlessness of toxic leadership is often expressed in sexual immorality. Persons of power can psychologically and morally manipulate their followers into immoral and abusive sexual relationships. Sexual relationships between persons of power and their followers should never be viewed as consensual.²⁰

At Corinth, Paul was challenged by the super-apostles. The super-apostles were really false-apostles, “deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” These false-christs, false-prophets, and false-apostles are very difficult to discern because they hide within the church as angels (messengers) of light.²¹ One would be sorely mistaken to

¹³ Matthew 7:15; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29; 2 Corinthians 11:13; 2 Peter 2:1; 2 John 2:7

¹⁴ Mark 13:22

¹⁵ Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 370.

¹⁶ 1 John 2:18, 22: 4:3; 2 John 7

¹⁷ Matthew 7:15

¹⁸ Matthew 7:21-23

¹⁹ Revelation 2:14-15, 20

²⁰ Diana R. Garland, “When Wolves Wear Shepherd’s Clothing: Helping Women Survive Clergy Sexual Abuse,” *Social Work and Christianity* 33.1, 3. Garland describes three types of offenders: “The *predator* actively seeks opportunities to abuse women with little or no sense of appropriate moral restrictions. The *wanderer* under normal circumstances would never contemplate a sexual liaison with a congregant but is experiencing an overwhelming crisis or life transition that leads him over the boundary. The *lover* ... simply falls in love with someone who happens to be a member of his congregation” (6).

²¹ 2 Corinthians 11:5, 13-14

believe that toxic leaders are limited to pedophile priests and suicidal cult leaders. Toxic leaders are often gifted with chameleon-like qualities with the ability to hide in plain sight. Also, their colleagues and disciples within the church enable, and sometimes even prefer, toxic leaders.²² Many of the Corinthian believers preferred the false-apostles over Paul. The false-super-apostles distinguished themselves over Paul by boasting of their achievements and by contrasting their strengths over Paul's weaknesses. They presented themselves as victorious, anointed "men of divine power."²³ The Apostle John rebuked Diotrefes, an elder of the church in Asia Minor, because he "loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say... unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and . . . does not receive the brethren."²⁴ All too often, the toxic nature of a leader is ignored, or camouflaged (with the complicity of colleagues) for years and is not discovered until considerable harm has been inflicted upon the church.

WHY ARE WE SUSCEPTIBLE TO TOXIC LEADERS?

Why would hundreds of people follow Jim Jones into the jungle of Guyana and drink poisoned Kool-Aid? What is the appeal of heretical teaching? Why do tens of thousands of people devote considerable time and money to religious leaders of dubious character and motivations? Why do colleagues and disciples of toxic leaders ignore their destructive and dysfunctional behavior?

INTOXICATION

Toxic leaders are intoxicating. Humans thirst for power and easily become intoxicated by it. Humans have an existential need for security, achievement, and meaning. In other words, humans are motivated by self-interest. Toxic leaders are destructive and dysfunctional, but they also have energy that drives them toward success.²⁵ Many people find that their existential needs are satisfied by the energy of toxic leaders. Intoxication produces excitement and euphoria. The relationship between the toxic leader and the intoxicated followers is symbiotic. In the church, toxic leaders are persons of pseudo-spiritual power. The false-prophets speak superficial words that offer a false sense of security.²⁶ The false-apostles perform miracles and teach "special revelations" that inspire (and deceive) their disciples. Intoxicated disciples reciprocate by venerating their leader and providing financial support. Ears are tickled²⁷ and egos are massaged. The truth of the

²² Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders* (Oxford University Press, 2004), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 2, Location 619.

²³ Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 39.

²⁴ 3 John 9-10

²⁵ Bruce Tucker, "The Use of Authority and Power as Transformational Leaders" in *Leading with Integrity*, Donald S. Aultman, ed., (Cleveland, TN: Church of God School of Ministry, 2004), 140-141.

²⁶ Jeremiah 6:13-14

²⁷ 2 Timothy 4:3

message of Christ is lost amidst the frivolity of it all. Intoxication also produces confusion and stupor. Leader and disciples are willing to throw caution to the wind unaware of the inevitable devastating crash. Intoxication often causes death. The very energy that drives toxic leaders to succeed will, in the end, also be their undoing.

IDOLATRY

Max Weber defined a charismatic leader as an individual who is “set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural . . . powers or qualities” that are “not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin.” According to Weber, allegiance to a charismatic leader is guaranteed by miraculous signs and “is freely given” as “hero worship” and “absolute trust” by devotees.²⁸ The trust given to charismatic leaders by devotees is often blind. Even when the destructive behaviors and dysfunctional personal qualities of the charismatic leader become common knowledge, ardent disciples often mimic the three mystic apes – they choose to hear nothing, see nothing, or speak nothing that may cast a negative shadow upon their leader.²⁹ Sometimes, the distinction between being endowed with supernatural qualities and deification becomes blurred. The charismatic leader becomes something of a demigod. The leader’s colleagues promote the illusion of omnipotence and the disciples feed the toxicity because of their existential needs.³⁰ When one is a god, the rules of mortals don’t apply and serious abuses of power will occur. In Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, the deification of the leader is often expressed in the theology of *the anointed one*.³¹ This teaching suggests that believers should be submissive to “anointed leadership” even when the anointed leader demonstrates sinful, dysfunctional, or destructive behavior.³² Therefore, the anointed servant of God is beyond accountability. Holding to this toxic myth, many believers have

²⁸ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 358-359.

²⁹ Kanchanalak Pornpimol, “Searching for the Fourth Monkey in a Corrupted World,” *The Nation*. [Internet: Accessed on October 6, 2012]. In the ancient Buddhist tradition, the three mystic apes represent a proverb that suggests one should not allow evil to enter their mind. However, Pornpimol has written, “Nowadays, the maxim is generally about turning a blind eye, either because of empathy, wariness or weariness. It has also become the code of silence adopted by members of street gangs and organized crime bodies.”

³⁰ Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*, Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 5, Location 1915.

³¹ Psalm 105:15; 1 Chronicles 16:22. Examples of this teaching can be found throughout the preaching and publications of Pentecostal and Charismatic ministers. One such example is: John Bevere, *Under Cover: The Promise of Protection under His Authority* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001). I cite Bevere because his book has been used by several Church of God administrative bishops to train pastors in the “proper understanding” of authority in the church. Also, Bevere was a featured speaker in several Church of God camp meetings.

³² For an example of how this false teaching has been used to deceive and abuse an entire megachurch, see: Scott Thumma, *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: Megachurches In Modern American Society*, Ph.D. dissertation (Emory University, 1996), 373. Thumma tells the story of Bishop Earl Paulk and Chapel Hill Harvester Church. Through the years, many accusations of misconduct were leveled against Paulk and the staff of CHHC. Paulk sought to maintain authoritarian control, rebuking his accusers by prophesying of their demise because they dared to touch the anointed man of God.

been complicit in allowing toxic leaders to sow their destructive seeds throughout the church.

The idolatrous tendencies that contribute to toxic systems within the church are demonstrated in the emphasis on triumphalism and success. Success is often interpreted as God's favor, even if the successful leader has fatal flaws.³³ George Reed has written that "toxic leaders might be highly competent and effective in a short-sighted sense, but they contribute to an unhealthy . . . climate with ramifications extending far beyond their tenure."³⁴ Jean Lipman-Blumen has suggested that the success of toxic leaders may be attributed to their ability to sell a "grand illusion" to their followers. A "grand illusion" is defined as "grandiose dreams of an unrealistic future that are unconditionally positive for the followers – as long as they obey the leader." The toxic illusion assuages fears, dulls pain, and affirms destiny, all if the disciples give unwavering allegiance to the leader. The toxic leader's grand illusion becomes the basis of morality. Any action in service of fulfilling the grand illusion is a just and moral act.³⁵ However, the toxic system cannot be maintained. The fall of the toxic leader and collapse of the grand illusion will have devastating psychological and spiritual consequences upon everyone involved.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

All conflict in the church is spiritual warfare on some level. Too often, in Pentecostal churches all spiritual conflict is attributed to a single antagonist – the devil. However, spiritual warfare is much more complex than a wrestling match between the devil and a spiritual leader. There are at least five levels of spiritual warfare. First, there is inner conflict, that is, the ongoing struggle of an individual's conscience to choose obedience over disobedience. This conflict is common to every human. Here lies the root cause of *unintentional* toxic leaders. Non-toxic leaders may develop toxic tendencies. Most toxic leaders in the church did not begin with malicious or manipulative intentions. But, unresolved internal conflict can cause sinful choices, promote incompetence, or passivity. The Apostle Paul warned that immature or unprepared leaders might "become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil."³⁶

Second, there is conflict within the church. Conflict within the church may, or may not, begin with malicious intent; but it is always motivated by self-interest and exacerbated by self-deception. Self-deception is "insistent blindness," that is, the inability to see beyond one's "own closed perspective" and deeply resistant to the possibility that "the truth may

³³ Thumma, *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory*, 375-377. Thumma documents Earl Paulk's theme of "fallen but anointed" throughout. During thirty years of leadership, many of Paulk's staff and loyal members were aware of his ongoing immorality, but remained loyal because they believed in his prophetic anointing.

³⁴ George E. Reed, "Toxic Leadership," *Military Review* (July-August 2004), 67.

³⁵ Jean Lipman-Blumen, "Toxic Leadership: When Grand Illusions Masquerade as Noble Visions," 6-9.

³⁶ 1 Timothy 3:6

be otherwise.”³⁷ Here are the seeds of *intentional* toxic leadership – destructive behavior and dysfunctional personal qualities – that can transform egocentrism into megalomania. Ron Susek has written that the greatest threat in church conflict is human nature, a nature that tends to deify opinions “which results in throwing off moral and spiritual restraints, because their opinions *feel* right.”³⁸ Self-deception leads to self-justification, which can lead to self-deification and apostasy.

The third type of spiritual warfare is conflict from outside the church – the world’s systems in opposition to the mission of God. This conflict has its roots in culture, economics, and politics that are threatened by the kingdom of God. Jesus said, “. . . the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.”³⁹ The violent conflict of the world against the kingdom of God is manifest in the crucifixion of Jesus and continues in the persecution of the church.

Paul informs us that behind all human conflicts are the “schemes of the devil” and “the spiritual forces of wickedness.”⁴⁰ This is the fourth level of spiritual warfare. The reality of demonic powers does not release humans from culpability or accountability. Satan is not omnipresent, nor is Satan omniscient. The forces of wickedness have limited power and authority. Demons do not share in God’s image. Only humans were created in the image of God and therefore humans are uniquely responsible to God for the consequences of their actions and inactions.

This brings us to the ultimate level of spiritual warfare – conflict with God. Jesus promised that the gates of Hades will not overpower the church.⁴¹ So, how do we explain the demise of churches that have suffered catastrophic toxic leadership? Did the devil do it? Did the toxic leaders do it? Or, maybe God intervened for the sake of God’s mission. When the churches of Asia Minor found themselves in conflict with Christ, Christ threatened to “remove your lampstand,” to “make war,” to cause “great tribulation,” to “come like a thief,” and “spit you out of my mouth.”⁴² Each of these churches tolerated and suffered from toxic leadership. Christ confronted their sinfulness, called for repentance, and warned of judgment. When a church fails to obediently respond to the voice of the Spirit, God becomes the church’s greatest antagonist.

³⁷ The Arbinger Institute, *Leadership and Self-Deception, 2nd edition* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2010) Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 3, Location 352.

³⁸ Ron Susek, *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 105.

³⁹ Matthew 11:12

⁴⁰ Ephesians 6:11-12

⁴¹ Matthew 16:18

⁴² Revelation 2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 16

PEER ACCOUNTABILITY – SANCTIFICATION THROUGH COMMUNITY

Paul charged the Ephesian church elders: “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” His warning is not to guard the flock from the devil, but from toxic leaders *within* the church: “. . . savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”⁴³ Here we discern two aspects of guarding the flock. First, church leaders must exercise sober caution in the initial placement of leaders in ministry. Paul places the responsibility for dealing with toxic leadership squarely upon the bishops and elders of the church. He warns, “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.”⁴⁴ When the bishops of the church fail to guard against toxic leaders, they become complicit toxic leaders. Second, Paul warns that bishops and elders must be diligent to provide ongoing accountability for leaders within the church. As stated earlier, non-toxic leaders can develop toxic characteristics. Therefore, there must be ongoing accountability processes that can discern early signs of toxicity in an effort to prevent conflict caused by toxic leaders. Peer accountability seeks to minimize toxic influences and maintain integrity in the church. It requires that church leaders not focus upon justifying themselves, but on the soul care of their colleagues and peers. It replaces a culture of blame with a culture of responsibility and accountability.⁴⁵ Peer accountability in the church is a means of sanctification.

CHRISM, CHARISMATA, AND CHARACTER

Pentecostal leaders must seriously embrace a model of peer accountability that understands *chrism*⁴⁶ in terms of holy character and proper exercise of the *charismata*.⁴⁷ Sometimes the temptation has been to favor *chrism* and *charismata* over character. However, the apostolic witness is unanimous that holy character is the primary evidence of *chrism* and *charismata*. Jesus’ charge against the false-prophets was that in spite of their apparent *chrism* and manifestation of *charismata*, they lacked holy character and integrity. He declared, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but *he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*”⁴⁸ Paul wrote that bishops must be “above reproach” in the church and “have a good reputation with those outside the church.”⁴⁹ Paul affirms that the *chrism* of leadership is bestowed by the Holy Spirit through

⁴³ Acts 20:29-30

⁴⁴ 1 Timothy 5:22

⁴⁵ The Arbinger Institute, *Leadership and Self-Deception*, Location 2447 – 2465.

⁴⁶ From *χρῖσμα*, i.e., the anointing of the Holy Spirit. See: 1 John 2:20, 27.

⁴⁷ From *χαρίσματα*, i.e., spiritual gifts. See: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

⁴⁸ Matthew 7:21

⁴⁹ 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

the sacramental act of laying on of hands.⁵⁰ However, it is significant that as Paul states the qualifications for those who serve as bishops and deacons, he does not offer *charismata* as qualifier, but expressions of virtue and character. *Chrism* and *charismata* without holy character are nothing more than “a ring of gold in a swine’s snout.”⁵¹

The anointed leaders of the church are worthy of “double honor,” but they are not beyond accountability. In fact, double honor suggests a higher level of accountability. One of the marks of integrity is the willingness to be held accountable; and to graciously answer the toughest questions posed by one’s greatest critics. Being anointed by God doesn’t mean being above scrutiny; but that when our lives, statements, and decisions are scrutinized, we are found to be above reproach. As leaders submit themselves to a serious process of accountability, their integrity will be preserved. The elders are to be subject to, and held accountable by, their peers in ministry. Multiple accusations against leaders are to be taken seriously and without partiality. Those who have publicly sinned are to be publicly rebuked.⁵² Those whose sin is not publically known should be discreetly rebuked. Paul frequently suggests that those who are spiritual (that is, the charismatic prophets) are to be subject to the elders and received Tradition of the church. This requires that the bishops and leaders of the church exercise discernment and discipline. When the charismatic prophets speak Spirit-inspired words, the other leaders are to pass judgment.⁵³ Those who refuse to be held accountable are to be avoided, or excommunicated.⁵⁴ Peer accountability requires all bishops and elders of the church to be accountable to the apostles’ teaching (the Scriptures and received Tradition) and to each other.

Peer accountability cannot be coerced. Authoritarian leadership often provokes antagonism and distrust because power can become a toxic influence. Also, powerful leaders can be unintentionally intimidating. Often, ministerial colleagues will resist peer accountability fearing they will be harshly judged, or found to be inadequate.⁵⁵ Sometimes, ministerial colleagues avoid or disassociate themselves from their colleagues because they are conflicted. Leaders must discern avoidance or conflict issues and take the initiative to work towards reconciliation. Peer accountability must be established in terms of mutual love and respect. If this goal is to be achieved, then the leaders must promote a culture of humility in which the powerful seek to empower their colleagues.⁵⁶ Genuine relationships

⁵⁰ 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6

⁵¹ Proverbs 11:22

⁵² 1 Timothy 5:17-25; Titus 1:13; 3:10-11.

⁵³ 1 Corinthians 11:2; 14:26-40; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; Titus 1:9.

⁵⁴ Romans 16:17; Matt 7:15; Gal 1:8f; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; 2 John 10.

⁵⁵ David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson, *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2009), 272, 538.

⁵⁶ Matthew 20:20-28; Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Peter 5:5. The culture of humility is exemplified in the sacramental act of foot washing (John 13). See: Daniel Tomberlin, *Pentecostal Sacraments: Encountering God at the Altar* (Cleveland, Tennessee: Center for Pentecostal Leadership and Care, 2010), 197-210.

must be established that provide a community of *shālôm* for ministers who are conflicted, depressed, and alienated. The goal of peer accountability must be understood in terms of mutual empowerment, edification, and unity of faith and mission.⁵⁷

Sometimes the discernment and discipline of peer accountability fails because bishops and elders lack proper self-differentiation. Ministry in community requires intimacy and vulnerability. Relationships of encouragement, support, and comfort must be developed and maintained. The temptation is that in an effort to be supportive, leaders can ignore signs of sinfulness and toxicity. Peer accountability requires that the bishops and elders of the church maintain a healthy self-differentiation. Edwin Friedman has defined self-differentiation as the leader's "capacity to be a non-anxious *presence*, a challenging *presence*, a well-defined *presence*, and a paradoxical *presence*" (emphasis mine).⁵⁸ The self-differentiated Christian leader must be rooted in a primary commitment to Christ and to the integrity and mission of the church, rather than allegiance to friends and colleagues in ministry. However, self-differentiated leadership is not independence from colleagues. The operative word is *presence*. The self-differentiated leader must maintain fellowship with the group in order to lead and transform the group.⁵⁹ The self-differentiated leader does not lead by authoritative coercion, but by the nature of his/her presence.⁶⁰ In other words, power is not based upon position or title, but in integrity and influence. The fellowship of the Spirit⁶¹ is not for the sake of fellowship, but for the sake of the sanctification of the church and the mission of Jesus Christ.

An example of self-differentiated leadership can be seen in the relationship between Paul and Peter. At the Jerusalem Council, attended by Peter, John, James, Paul and Barnabas (among many others), the decision was made that Gentile believers would not have to submit to circumcision. The decision appeared to be a Spirit-inspired consensus among the whole church. However, after the Council many leaders had great difficulty in understanding the significance of the decision. Some disciples of James continued to insist that Gentile converts be circumcised. Even Peter, whose testimony about the conversion of Cornelius was crucial to the finding of the Jerusalem Council, succumbed to the influence of the Judaizers. Peter and James were pillars of the church. Because of their status they influenced the consensus of the church. When Peter and Paul met at Antioch, Paul confronted Peter about his hypocrisy. Paul was in fellowship with Peter and James and he understood the necessity of unity. But Paul was sufficiently self-differentiated so that he

⁵⁷ Ephesians 4:12-13

⁵⁸ Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Seabury Books, 1999, 2007). Kindle Electronic Edition. Location 4408.

⁵⁹ Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), 228-229.

⁶⁰ Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, Chapter 8, Location 4425.

⁶¹ Philippians 2:1

understood that the integrity of the Gospel shaped his personal relationship with Peter. Paul's self-differentiated leadership was not narcissistic. He confronted Peter for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ. This confrontation provoked Peter to repentance, preserved the integrity of the Gospel, and maintained the unity of the church.⁶² Self-differentiated leaders understand the larger issues. Proper self-differentiated leaders function as the church's immune system because they maintain the standard of integrity and stay focused on the church's mission.⁶³

The Church of God has an adequate infrastructure of polity and programs to provide proper peer accountability. However, there are weaknesses in implementation. First, ministerial development is limited to preparation for ministry and qualification for ministerial credentials. If we are to move to a culture of peer accountability that seeks to be pro-active against toxic leadership, ministerial development must be understood as an on-going process of evaluation, education, and accountability. Presently, ministerial development ends with the rank of ordained minister. The church should provide ministerial development through all ranks of ministry, and beyond. Ministerial development should be viewed as essential in *preparation* for ministry and the on-going *execution* of the mission of Christ.

Second, the regional administrative bishops of the church should reform and reinvigorate the district structure. District bishops should be appointed who have demonstrated the passion to shepherd pastors, build relationships, provide opportunities for spiritual formation, and offer counsel to conflicted colleagues. If properly trained and empowered, district bishops could become the primary leaders in developing a culture of peer accountability and discerning the seeds of toxic leadership.

⁶² Galatians 2:1-15

⁶³ Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, Chapter 8, Location 4425.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aultman, Donald S., ed. *Leading with Integrity*. Cleveland, Tennessee: Church of God School of Ministry, 2004.
- Augsburger, David. *Caring Enough to Confront, 3rd edition*. Ventura, California: Regal, 2009. Kindle Electronic Edition.
- Barnett, Paul. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.
- Boring, M. Eugene. *Mark: A Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.
- Elmer, Duane. *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Friedman, Edwin H. *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1985.
- _____. *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. New York: Seabury Books, 1999, 2007. Kindle Electronic Edition.
- Garland, Diana R. "When Wolves Wear Shepherd's Clothing: Helping Women Survive Clergy Sexual Abuse," *Social Work and Christianity*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2006), 1-35.
- Johnson, David W. and Frank P. Johnson. *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills, 10th edition*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2009.
- Kanchanalak, Pornpimol. "Searching for the Fourth Monkey in a Corrupted World." *The Nation*. Accessed on October 6, 2012 from <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/home/2011/04/21/opinion/Searching-for-the-fourth-monkey-in-a-corrupted-wor-30153534.html>
- Leas, Speed B. *Moving Your Church through Conflict*. The Alban Institute, 1985, 2002.
- Lipman-Blumen, Jean. *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Kindle Electronic Edition.
- _____. "Toxic Leadership: When Grand Illusions Masquerade as Noble Visions." *Leader to Leader*, Spring 2005. Accessed on October 4, 2012, from http://www.connectiveleadership.com/articles/when_grand_illusions_masquerade_as_non_ob_visions.pdf
- Reed, George E. "Toxic Leadership." *Military Review*, July-August 2004, 67-71.
- Sande, Ken. *Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.
- Steinke, Peter L. *How Your Church Family Works*. The Alban Institute, 1993, 2000.

_____. *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*. The Alban Institute, 1996, 2006.

Stevens, R. Paul and Phil Collins. *The Equipping Pastor*. The Alban Institute, 1993.

Susek, Ron. *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.

The Arbinge Institute, *Leadership and Self-Deception, 2nd edition*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2010. Kindle Electronic Edition.

Thumma, Scott. *The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: Megachurches in Modern American Society*, Ph.D. dissertation. Emory University, 1996.

Tomberlin, Daniel. *Pentecostal Sacraments: Encountering God at the Altar*. Cleveland, Tennessee: Center for Pentecostal Leadership and Care, 2010.

Weber, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: The Free Press, 1997.