SESSION ONE: CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY OF ADVENTIST LEADERSHIP

A LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP
Based on the Collected Papers from the Leadership Symposium General Conference Session
July 3-7, 2005
SESSION one

Character and Personality of Adventist Leadership

Based on the Keynote Presentation by General Conference President

Jan Paulsen
Why the subject of Adventist leadership is especially important now.

What makes Adventist leadership so special.

Where we go and what we look for when we seek to profile the leadership character of our church.

These workshop sessions on leadership will explore:

1. Why the subject of Adventist leadership is especially important now.
2. What makes Adventist leadership so special.
3. Where we go and what we look for when we seek to profile the leadership character of our church.
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Session 1 will address the following questions:

1. Why is it important that we focus on Adventist leadership at this time?

2. What are the major qualities that Adventist leaders should demonstrate?

3. How can leaders develop these characteristics?

4. What characteristics should leaders avoid?
Leadership in the Adventist Church is different from leadership in business or leadership in politics.
TRUST is critical in church leadership.

A leader cannot command or demand *trust*; he/she must earn *trust* by being *trustworthy*. 
It is vitally important that *trust* NOT be swallowed up by *obsession* for control.
Realities *that* Compel Us *to* Consider *the* Matter *of* Leadership

I. The Expanding Church
There will be about 31.5 million baptized Adventist members by the year 2020.

These members, together with their children and other unbaptized church attendees, will total nearly 50 million by that time.
By 2020, the Adventist Church will be a “young church;” most will have been members for 20 years or less.

FIGURE 2. Projected Distribution of Adventist Church Members in 2020
Since the expanding church will be a “young” church, we must consider how we pass on identity and values from one generation of believers to the next.
Leadership must identify the faith identity and range of values that are integral to being a Seventh-day Adventist anywhere. These values transcend time and culture.

Leadership must give priority to asserting and nurturing these values.
II. The Inevitability of Change

Change cannot be resisted and should not be feared.
It is critical that leadership clearly identify the spiritual DNA of Seventh-day Adventism.

This spiritual DNA transcends cultures and traditions.

Leadership must retain, treasure, nurture, and pass it on to our children and to the next generation of church members.
III. The Strength of Permanence

Leadership must guide the church in living creatively with both.

Change will be anchored to the church’s specific landmarks.
The Adventist Church is a global community with constant interaction among cultures.

Leadership must clearly identify those values that

- *we will continue to hold*
- *transcend time and culture*
V. Celebrating Diversity While Maintaining Our Values
Leadership must

• *identify the basket of Adventist non-variables*

• *not be threatened by local cultural expression*

• *place values above culture*

Local traditions can only do us harm if we are uncertain about our faith and moral values.
Leadership must react proactively to bring out the appropriate richness in our global family.
The Church as a Global Community
Our unity as a global church is based on the strong foundation of God’s Word.
 Ephesians 4:3-6 (NIV)

3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all and in all.

Eph 4:3-6 (NIV)
As a global community, we have in common:
- a *model constitution*
- a *set of policies*
- a *church manual*
- 28 *fundamental beliefs*
- an *integrated financial support system*

These foster our commitment to unity. The unity we share is primarily spiritual.
Jesus wants His church to be united. Just before His crucifixion He prayed the prayer in John 17.
11“... I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. . .

21“that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

22“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:

23“I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

John 17:11, 21-23 (NIV)
The church is Christ’s mystical body in the world today.

A fractured church is a church in denial.

The church is God’s preferred instrument of mission.
“Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard.” (Acts of the Apostles, p. 12)
Leadership must

- give undivided allegiance to the Lord and to His Body
- tenderly care for the needs of the church
“Love” is Christ’s favored word to describe the bonding relationship between members of the family of faith.
Church leaders must love the church enough

- to suffer for it
- to give themselves for it
Leaders will not:

- be self-serving
- be casual or frivolous with the life and well-being of the church
- impose their own independent "wisdom" on
Christ is the model for Adventist leaders.
The church has only one Lord, Jesus Christ, not the elected church leader.
Leaders will

- remember that they are servants
- love and respect members of the church family
- reflect this in their style of leadership
Adventist leadership

- always defers to what is understood and agreed upon by the larger church body
- agrees as a global family on how we shall act and what we shall do
- works on the basis of consultation and consensus
Adventist leadership

- will be sensitive to what the church can accept at any given time
- will not outpace the community it serves
- will not show a spirit of independence
“There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren.”

(Testimonies for the Church, Vol 3, p. 431)
“Sometimes a man who has been placed in responsibility as a leader gains the idea that he is in a position of supreme authority, and that all his brethren, before making advance moves, must first come to him for permission to do that which they feel should be done.
Such a man is in a dangerous position. He has lost sight of the work of a true leader among God’s people. Instead of acting as a wise counselor, he assumes the prerogatives of an exacting ruler. God is dishonored by every such display of authority and self-exaltation.”

*(Testimonies for the Church, Vol 3, p. 493)*
Leaders in the church

- will seek that which is good for the whole body
- function in the interest of the whole church

If this is compromised, the unity of the whole church is undermined.

One who cannot see this or will not abide by it should not accept a leadership appointment in the church.
A conference organization is as bonded to the whole body of the church as it is to the local congregation under its supervision.
Church leaders

- serve at the pleasure of the community
- should not take service for granted
- should not become bitter if not reelected
“If you cannot accept being elected out, you should not accept being elected in!”
Qualities Needed for Election to Church Leadership

Spirituality

A church leader

- must be driven by spiritual qualities and concerns
- must demonstrate spiritual leadership
After spirituality, **humility** and **integrity** are the highest qualities needed in Adventist leadership.

*Transparency* is the filter through which humility and integrity are seen.
Humility

Not being proud, haughty, or arrogant

OLD TESTAMENT

8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk 

NEW TESTAMENT

4 "Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Matt 18:4 (NIV)

Mic 6:8 (NIV)
Integrity

When one stands at the helm of leadership, it is critical that one not sell his soul or get caught in a conflict of interest.
Greed and self-seeking do not belong in any leadership assignment in our church.

“If self is woven into the work, it is as the offering of strange fire in the place of the sacred. Such workers incur the displeasure of the Lord.”

(Testimonies to Ministers, p. 260.1)
Vision

The capacity

- to see beyond where you are presently standing
- to see opportunities
- to define their values
The Adventist community wants to know where their leaders are going, not just what they hold in their hands.
The honor to serve the church and the Lord in a leadership capacity should be accepted only after prayerful consideration by the individual and his family.
Leadership should be an experience of joy and fulfillment.

When it ceases to be that, the leader should step aside.
Adventist Church leaders always operate with an awareness of certain fundamental truths.
They always live in anticipation of our Lord’s return.
They are conscious that we live with the unfinished assignment of being Christ’s witnesses.
They are ever deliberate in focusing the church on mission. Mission is THE primary reason for our being as a church.
This is our Mission:

19“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. . . .”  

Matt 28:19,20 (NIV)
IN SUMMARY

Leadership in the Adventist Church is an assignment of love, loyalty, and devotion to the Lord and to His church.