(MIS)
LEADING

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INTRODUCTION

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This is a trend report about leadership. More specifically, it is about leadership in the context of our current global political climate. It is said that a society is only as good as its leaders. The leader(s) of a country, organisation or congregation has/have a deciding effect on what happens in the rest of the system. However, it seems that not only Western society, but the entire world is currently in crisis in terms of the standard and quality of its leadership (Guinness 2016:21-23). Ray Croc said: "The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves"[1] Theo Veldsman (professor in Business Psychology and Human Resources Management at the University of Johannesburg) states (2016: ad loc.):

> *"People around the world are angry and frustrated with those who "lead" them. Increasingly, leaders and leadership generate scepticism and, in some cases, open revolt."*

Countries and citizens everywhere are dissatisfied with the standards, values and opinions of their own leaders. But this feeling is far from new. In the previous century, shortly after Hitler's Nazi terror reign, there was a shockwave of disillusionment about the global damage that one person in a position of power could do. Since the Second World War, there has been a lingering feeling of disillusionment and frustration with people in positions of leadership (Frank 1993: ad loc). Today, this scepticism stretches from political leadership, through business and sport, all the way to leadership in the church (Kinnaman & Lyons 2016:28). This perception of a lack of moral and effective leadership doesn't only affect the political and economic climate of a country, but also the followers of Jesus and the church of Christ. This trend report attempts to open a window (albeit a small one) on the effects on the church, as well as to reflect on how the church should react.

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1. *https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/leadership*

WORLDWIDE TREND

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We can't deny that the current world politics scene has heavily influenced our perception of leadership in South Africa today (Veldsman 2016: ad loc.). Veldsman's words once again resonate with a large portion of the world's population (2016: ad loc.):

> "*People's trust and faith in leadership and the institutions they represent is evaporating at an alarming rate. There's a deepening, widening crisis in the legitimacy and credibility of leadership. This crisis can be attributed to five primary sources: unable; unintelligent; immature; immoral and/or destructive leaders. I estimate that at least 30% – and rising – of the world's current leadership is virally infected by one or more of these sources. It is crucial that this crisis is tackled, and leadership is reimagined to fit the new world order*."

The most current and visible example is the division in America since Donald Trump was elected as president. When Trump announced that he would stand as candidate in the presidential election in the USA, he did it because of his own and other Americans' dissatisfaction with the political order of the time. He felt that America's leaders allowed the country to be cheated in negotiations with China, Japan and Mexico (Coultier 2016:3). New leadership was needed – that's what he thought. His solution? Making himself president.

The irony is that there is immense critique against Trump, specifically about his moral life, his ethics and his political opinions on race and immigrants. Although some Republicans are still positive, a large part of the USA and the rest of the world feel disillusioned. The disillusionment stems mainly from two sources: *firstly,* that the American public could allow someone with Trump's background to be elected as president, and *secondly*, Trump's character and leadership style. Since Trump's election victory, the world now often speaks of "shock politics" (Klein 2017:1). Shock politics refers to trends in leadership, or tools used by leaders, that are experienced as a "shock" to the current system or the current way of doing things. Examples of this in Trump includes his racist views on immigrants, his immoral background regarding

women, as well as his withdrawal from global warming congresses and his total denial of the phenomenon. Shock politics can also refer to the shocking consequences of this leadership on the economy, disgruntlement amongst the public, civil society and the global political climate (Klein 2017:1-5). It can also refer to the brutal strategy of some politicians to use (or abuse?) the public's disorientation after a collective shock such as a mass shooting, a terrorist attack, a market failure or a natural disaster.

These and other strategies that politicians use are perceived by the public not as primarily political, but as immoral, because they believe such leaders don't have their best interests at heart (Cillizza 2017: ad loc.). "*Ethical leaders do the right thing for the right reasons in the right way in the right place and at the right time with the right people*" (Veldsman 2016: ad loc.). This is one of the sources of disillusionment with today's leadership.

The perception that immoral leaders can't be trusted, is as old as the mountains. We are reminded of many dictators from Biblical times up to the present. The leaders just have their tricks up more sophisticated sleeves today. A more recent example is that of senator John Ensign's extramarital affairs a few years ago (George 2011: ad loc.).

An article in the *Express Tribune* by Munawar Mirza sketches an accurate picture of the political leadership in the rest of the world. Referring to political leaders, he says (2016: ad loc.):

> "*The Middle East is in total disarray. Syria has been embroiled in a five-year civil war, and world powers have only now agreed on a plan to cease hostilities in the country in a week's time. Iraq is on the verge of collapse, while Libya is a failed state. Saudi Arabia and Iran are entangled in a contest for regional domination, Afghanistan is still in turmoil, and Pakistan is fighting its war on terror. In addition, we see China and Japan pitted against each other in the conflict over the islands in the East China Sea. Europe is facing*

islands in the East China Sea. Europe is facing challenges in the form of the refugee crisis."

It isn't only on the political front that the public feel their leaders have failed them, but also areas such as business and sport. Over the last couple of years, the CEO of Hewlett-Packard resigned after submitting a false expenses report about his relationship with a supplier; and Lee B. Farkas, former chairman of Taylor, Bean & Whitaker, was caught in one of the biggest bank fraud cases in history (George 2011: ad loc.). These are only two examples of many.

A lack of morality in leadership is only one of the problems. Veldsman (2016: ad loc.) showed that world leadership today don't have the ability to lead a country. They don't have general competency such as inter- and intrapersonal skills and systemic thinking, they aren't comfortable in the world of ideas, they don't have action and contextual skills. He furthermore claims that a large percentage of today's leaders are immature and stuck in earlier developmental phases. Lastly, some of our world leaders are decidedly toxic. This means that they deliberately try to suppress the dignity of people who differ from them.

SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

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Covey says (1989): *"Leadership is not position. It is moral authority. Moral authority comes from following universal and timeless principles like honesty, integrity, treating people with respect."* In South Africa we had in Nelson Mandela an exceptionally inspiring example of moral leadership. Since Mandela's retirement, however, the general sentiment has been that standards have slipped. All the elements named above by Veldsman also apply to South Africa.

You don't have to look at many articles and website to gauge the general feeling of South Africans. You only need to watch the news or open a newspaper to know exactly what everyone thinks. Bohang Mohale is the CEO of Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA). He also serves on the Advisory Board of the University of Pretoria. He summarises people's feelings well when he says our country's leadership have set the country back by twenty years and it will take a long time to recover (2017: ad loc.). He goes on: "*Resources are not a problem, it is our inability to manage them... We are poor by choice, not by fate. We have chosen leaders who have created this reality for us.*"

IMPACT ON **CHURCH LEADERS**
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All these trends have an influence on the world of the church. People in congregations, as well as society, are sceptical about the competency and character of church leaders. And sometimes they are right. Church leaders should also be focused on managing their inner worlds (perhaps more so than others). But the newest available research shows that 44% of American ministers have watched pornography in the last few months (Barna Trends 2017: 192). Under the last heading in this trend report, on *what the church can do* (point 4), there are other examples of church leaders' inner struggles.

On the perceptual level the most recent studies show, *firstly*, that society in general don't view church leaders as being credible guides to real life (Kinnaman & Lyons 2016:28). This decrease in the perceived credibility of church leaders have been with us for the past 50 years. 33% of all adults think their ministers have good knowledge of "spiritual things" such as knowledge of the Bible or knowing God's will. However, only one out of every six adults think their ministers can give them good advice or can apply the Biblical message to areas such as politics or the law, or talk about other issues in life (Kinnaman & Lyons 2016:28-29).

A *second* perception is that faith-driven organisations are irrelevant in a charity-conscious society (Kinnaman & Lyons 2016:29). What this means, is that society no longer believes that faith in Jesus makes believers more generous, nor that it leads to higher participation in charity projects. Non-believers are just as involved, it is believed, although this assumption isn't quite accurate.

A *third* perception of society is that the Christian faith is irrelevant for the "right things" in life (Kinnaman & Lyons 2016:31-32). Jesus was a good person, but his teachings didn't have much of an impact on modern life. We will be quite alright without Him and his church, at least in general moral and cultural areas. Church leaders aren't any better than other people, and therefore they aren't really needed. A large part of this perception is, of course, created by church leaders themselves inside the church.

Through all these events and trends in society, and the scepticism about leaders in public positions, the church of Jesus is also affected. The church in South Africa is fast losing its influence and this means that we can't make the heavenly impact that God expects of us. The next section of this report deals with the question of what we can do to cultivate the type of leadership that the world will want to listen to.

WHAT CAN THE **CHURCH DO?**
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Naturally, the first impulsive reaction is to frantically search for the "silver bullet" that will quickly set things right (Veldsman 2016: ad loc.). However, we have the best principles and tools to train excellent leaders in the gospel. Through this, loyal, missional congregations are able to have a positively transforming effect on society. The challenge is – as we've seen – that the church also struggles with a leadership crisis. We will have to renew our own thoughts about leadership. And we'll have to start with our own leaders.

The solution to this global trend is therefore in the first place to become and be good leaders in the church. Research in congregations show that ministers – despite cultural voices that underestimate their value – still have a huge impact, and can make or break a congregation) (Hanekom 2015:33). Healthy congregations – lead by good and healthy leaders – can once again make an enormous impact on the community. Which factors should we as leaders therefore focus on in our congregations?

1. **Faithful leaders conserve, protect and add value to our core values and basic Biblical principles.** When church members experience pressure from society, some leaders are of the opinion that we should compromise some of our core values in order to "adapt" (Spangenberg 2002; Spong). Values are, however, more important than strategy, even in the arena of business. It was in the business context that I first learned to understand this principle. In 1994 Jim Collins and Jerry Porras published a book in which they asked how good organisations could stay successful in the long run. One of the most basic results they came up with was that good organisations stay true to their core values and principles (Collins & Porras 1994:80-82). Everything else can change: the strategy, the tactical plans and even the vision of an organisation. The values are the one thing that gives an organisation or church its own unique identity and voice.

   One such value in the historical church is following the *living, risen Jesus* (Sweet 2012:7-12). It may seem obvious, but many ministers in congregations have confessed to me that they no longer believe in a or Godly Jesus. Their faith in God is now essentially Jesus-less. Some have even said that they don't believe in God anymore and that they don't pray. I think this is one of the problems that we have in our congregations today: leaders who can't lead in following the risen Jesus. In some instances, it leads to the poor leadership found in churches today. Although these cases are probably in the minority, the tendency is on the rise amongst spiritual leaders. Furthermore, the faith of some church leaders who do believe is hanging by a thread because of their constant doubt, leaving no room for courageous leadership where people are lead to new dimensions in their faith. Doubt is understandable and a reality in any healthy person's faith. But doubt isn't a virtue. Constant doubt will bring you nowhere and church leaders who are caught in a spiral of doubt, can't lead their flocks.

   Another important value is the *Bible as foundation* of our understanding of reality and leadership. Surely spiritual leaders should lead people in understanding and living the Bible. It is therefore significant that the data on ministers who believe in the Bible as Divine revelation, indicates that only 5% think that knowledge of the Bible is a fundamental characteristic needed in order to be an effective leader in the congregation (Barna Trends 2017:202)! This means that ministers in general preach from the Bible, but when problem-solving or following Jesus is under discussion, they don't make much effort to understand and interpret the Bible. In a recent study, 34% of all Millennials and 28% of Gen-X'ers indicated that they never read the Bible (Barna Trends 2017:141). A congregation who moves away from the Bible risks giving up core values without which we can't hear God's voice anymore.

   Other values include Biblical aspects such as relationships, love, and the fruits of the Spirit that should form the foundation of leadership, relationships and congregational life.

2. **Create a healthy leadership culture in local congregations** (Hanekom 2015:19-20). Congregations in general do far too little to learn how leadership works and how it should be applied (Rom 12 and 1

Cor 12). Ideally, each person in the ministry should find out exactly what his/her talents are as soon as possible and should embark on a life-long journey to understand and use these God-given gifts. Today, there are so many conferences, books and lectures that no leader really has an excuse to be a poor leader. This knowledge and experience should be used to develop healthy leaders in a congregation so that the ministry of the kingdom can function effectively.

3. **Practise humble self-leadership in an age of doubtful leadership, poor character and "celebrity"** (Barna Trends 2017:205). As important as leadership is, it will never become the identity of a leader. Each leader should firstly be a humble follower (Sweet 2-12:19). Before we can lead anything or anyone, we must follow first. And our purpose in leadership is to serve our team and the congregation.

Much has been said, preached and written about leadership models. There is the "top-down" leadership style, and participatory leadership, and a pancake model for leadership, and even a "bottom-up" approach to leadership. After all these years I wonder whether there isn't too much emphasis on models. Much of the disillusionment with leadership that this report is about, can be avoided through the healthy, Spirit-filled, loving and humble character of the leader, regardless of which "model" he/she uses. I have seen strong leaders leading people in Thembisa in a system of leadership that looks decidedly autocratic from the outside, but who really serve the people around them with love, humility and dignity. I have also seen leaders who gush about "bottom-up" leadership, but who is purely arrogant. The "model" seems to be less important than the character of the leader(s).

This means that every leader should at all times strive towards the maximum spiritual growth and development in their relationship with the Lord, as well as their values and character (Hanekom 2015:34). In my work as congregation consultant, I have often been struck by the immaturity of some ministers. Some are simply narcissistic, selfish, materialistic and childish in their handling of relationships and ministry interactions. Some even had the reputation of always moaning about money, salaries and benefits, while they try to play the victim at the same time. But there are also those ministers who are mature and set very inspiring examples.

Perhaps ministers should reflect more often on the demands of leadership in texts such as 1 Timothy 3. Leaders should constantly remind each other that we should be irreproachable, faithful to our spouses, sober, wise and civilised. We should be good hosts, qualify ourselves to teach, not be quarrelsome and not become addicted to anything. We should be accommodating, peaceful and not greedy. We should exercise authority over our families in a dignified manner. We should be known by people outside the congregation, i.e. non-believers, as good people (verses 1-7). This is quite a list and a high standard to achieve! But this is the type of leadership that will bring back the right influence in the culture.

Leaders should protect their hearts. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) says: "*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*" As leaders, we have to pay special attention to this. Studies show that 46% of ministers have battled depression, 27% have had serious parenting problems, 26% have had marital problems and 19% have been addicted to something (Barna Trends 2017:201). These are the causes of many of the moral mistakes that leaders sometimes make. We should take the writer of Proverbs seriously. Jesus taught that good things flow from a good heart, and bad things flow from an evil heart (Matthew 12:33-37). Jesus here takes us from the external spirituality of the Pharisees, to an inner spirituality of the heart. Leaders should protect their hearts.

In his book *The 8th habit* (2002:12), Stephen Covey points out that the structures and laws of society were able to regulate people's moral behaviour in the past. Take sexual promiscuity, for example. If someone wanted

to use pornography 50 years ago, he would have to visit a shop that sold the magazines and risk getting caught. Today, technology has changed everything. Anyone can watch pornography in the "safety" of his own house on his phone. No one will ever know. One consequence of this is that people today should be morally stronger than ever before, because if you can't keep yourself on track spiritually and morally, you won't be able to protect your heart against evil or grow towards what is good. Covey says: (2002: 12): "*For the first time they (people) will have to manage themselves. And society is totally unprepared for it*." We should take responsibility for preventing arrogance, vanity, lust, lovelessness and bitterness from spoiling our hearts and destroying our leadership influence.

The only way in which this can happen, is when leaders expose themselves to mentors to whom they can be held accountable. We need loving relationships within which friends can be honest with us about our lives and where people can ask "tough questions" so that we can protect our hearts and so that our love can grow in Jesus.

5. **Good leaders fight for unity in their team** (Hanekom 2015:40-41). One of the greatest causes of us losing favour with society is when congregations or church members fight amongst themselves in destructive ways. This is especially true for ministry teams and leadership teams (such as boards). When ministry teams are unified, however, it will be very difficult for the leadership to create division. Ministry teams are usually diverse, and so it should be. The gospel of Jesus gives us all the relationship tools we need to work together in harmony. When colleagues are mature and each one strives towards personal growth, harmony is easy to achieve. Good leaders will strive towards this. Hanekom pointed out the characteristics of harmonious teams (2015:14):

   5.1. Healthy ministry teams have fun and laugh together often

   5.2. They grow together spiritually

   5.3. When there are differences, they solve their problems quickly and politely. No brooding is allowed.

   5.4. Different viewpoints are handled with respect and are accepted, but disloyalty is not. Those who can't give themselves fully to the team, should rather leave the team.

   5.5. Exercises where team members get to know each other's temperaments and personalities usually help a lot.

6. **Provide cultural leadership in a society that is searching for wisdom in life** (Barna Trends 2017:205). Spiritual leaders should also be involved in non-church activities in the culture and community. Thanks to the Internet, information is very cheap, but wisdom is scarce. In today's complex and uncertain times, there is a huge need for clarity and guidance. Therefore, we should be a gift of guidance to society that can help them interpret the information and events around them.

7. **Practise "reversed shock"** (Klein 2017:266): Leaders should lead the congregation in launching projects that communicate radical love in the global society, for the people of the country, for each other and for the earth. The most effective way in which we can re-establish our voice in society, is to launch activities that shout out God's love for our neighbours and planet so loudly that the world can't ignore us any longer. A half-hearted love and lukewarm gospel simply won't do. Through our actions and interactions with each other and the world, we'll have to show the world how "wide and far and high and deep Christ's love goes" (Ephesians 3:18). And we need Spirit-filled, courageous and brave leaders to lead us there.

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