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# Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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# Developing Good Church Leadership Habits

by Daryll Gordon Stanton

Leadership requires consistent sharpening to overcome bad habits, sometimes fatal, that leaders develop. I will interact with Hans Finzel's book *The Top Ten Mistakes That Leaders Make*: Victor Books, 1994. Since 1994 he has spoken with leaders from many different walks of life - policemen, teachers, school administrators, corporate leaders, middle management, government agency employees, businessmen, salespeople, family business owners, and the elders and staff of local churches. When he is asked, "Have you changed your mind about the top ten mistakes?", he answers: "Absolutely not!" (72-76).<sup>1</sup> The current edition has received many accolades. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church and author of *The Purpose Driven Life* observes, "Most leadership books have a short shelf life, but Hans' book has endured the test of time. It's a great read on servant leadership." John C. Maxwell, author of numerous leadership works, speaker, and founder of The Injoy Group<sup>2</sup> notes, "This is one of the most practical books on leadership I have in my own personal library. If you are serious about becoming a better leader, you will want to read this book." Joseph M. Stowell, author, speaker, and former president of Moody Bible Institute,<sup>3</sup> remarks: "Hans' book is a leader's mirror ... you'll see yourself in previously unrevealed ways and learn what it takes to get presentable for effective leadership" (1-3).

This paper highlights the ten bad habits that Finzel insists church leaders must avoid to end "the great leadership famine", offering them as suggestions for African leaders to consider. What are these bad habits and are they prevalent in the African Church - Yes or No?

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. The top-down attitude                  | Yes |
| 2. Putting paper-work before people-work  | Yes |
| 3. Absence of affirmation                 | Yes |
| 4. No room for mavericks                  | Yes |
| 5. Dictatorship in decision-making        | Yes |
| 6. Dirty delegation                       | Yes |
| 7. Communication chaos                    | Yes |
| 8. Missing the clues of corporate culture | Yes |
| 9. Success without successors             | Yes |
| 10. Failure to focus on the future        | Yes |

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<sup>1</sup> All references to Hans Finzel's book are from the Kindle e-book edition, originally published in Wheaton, Illinois by Victor Books in 1994, with a second edition published in 2007. Citations are from the second Victor Books edition and are in parenthesis within the text, with numbers indicating Kindle locations.

<sup>2</sup> John Maxwell's many leadership books include *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Joseph M. Stowell has contributed much to ministry and leadership, including his book, *Radical Reliance: Living 24/7 with God at the Center* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2006).

## 1. Get rid of the top-down attitude and embrace servant leadership.

As Finzel comments: "Of all the sins of poor leadership, none is greater and none is still committed more often, generation after generation" (163-164). Where does this leadership mistake show up in the Church? It may be seen in: "(1) abusive authority, (2) deplorable delegation, (3) lack of listening (4) dictatorship in decision making, (5) lack of letting go, and (6) in egocentric manners" (174-175). While our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates *servant leadership* to the Church, it is rare today, and unfortunately the top-down leadership attitude seems to come naturally to most leaders. Finzel reviews new leadership styles that oppose the top-down, autocratic style: 'participatory management', 'the flat organizational style', or the 'democratic leadership'. He concludes that "servant leadership embraces all" these models (193-194).

Emmanuel Wafula studied Philippians 2:3-11 and drew out seven *servant leadership* principles:

1. Christ's attitude of humility and sacrificial love for other people is foundational in understanding and practice of servant leadership.
2. Attitude influences our thought patterns and the way we view people and tasks as servant leaders.
3. Biblical servant leaders' primary concern is the value and dignity of others and they perceive the individual's self-worth as of greater importance than their needs.
4. Humility does not erode the personality of an individual. It shows the power and strength of the leader employed for the wellbeing of others.
5. Biblical servant leaders believe in followers however frail they might be and they help their followers to achieve self-actualization.
6. Biblical servant leaders exercise preferential treatment of others regardless of their social status.
7. Both pain and praise are intertwined in biblical servant leadership. A leader accepts the one in the place of the other.<sup>4</sup>

How then can today's church leaders practice servant leadership, leading without the arrogance of a top-down attitude? Or, as Finzel enquires: "If my desire is to be a servant leader as I maintain my responsibilities of authority in the organization, what are my guiding principles?" He offers six alternative practices (271-279):

1. Not abusive authority, but servitude (John 13).
2. Not deplorable delegation, but freedom for people to be themselves (Eph. 4).
3. Not lack of listening, but focus on the needs of others (Phil. 2).
4. Not dictatorship, but partners in the process (1 Peter 5:1-4).
5. Not holding on, but letting go with affirmation (1 Thess. 5:11-14).
6. Not egocentrism, but power for others (Col. 3:12, 13).

## 2. Do not put paper-work before people-work.

Not long ago one could have argued with Finzel about this being a major mistake in Africa, but probably not today. Due to the interaction in the global

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<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Wafula. *Inculcating a Biblical Attitude of Servant Leadership into Contemporary Leaders: A Case Study of Africa Nazarene University*. (An unpublished MAR thesis, 2010)

community, paper-pushers are finding a foothold in the urbanizing Africa, and they make statements like: (1) "People bother me; they are interruptions." (2) "I prefer to be alone ... to get my work done." (3) "This job would be great ... except for the people!" (4) "I'm out of touch with the networks and currents in the workplace." (5) "I'm insensitive; I tend to run over people." (6) "I listen poorly ... if at all." (7) "I'm impatient." (8) "My self-worth is based on accomplishment" (313-315).

Finzel read the Gospels, underlined all the leadership principles, and made an amazing discovery: "Jesus spent more time touching people and talking to them than doing any other action. His focus was not on words, it was on compassion" (389-391). The greater one's leadership role, the more important people work is. How can a pastor put aside the paperwork? Finzel's suggests that church leaders should "Love your wastebasket" (442-444). But what does this mean? It requires discarding old ways of doing things and finding ways to spend time with one's co-workers, spouse, children, and friends. This might include taking lunches away from work with others, praying for people, exercising with colleagues, changing locations to get out among people, delegating more, "ransacking" instead of reading everything, seeing people as priority one, and *Managing by Wandering Around* (MbWA). Finzel also recommends listening. "Listen is the most important word in a leader's language. Just because we are the leaders does not mean we are the only ones with a voice" (548-554). Finzel insists: "The L in leader stands for listening (James 1:19). In addition to these are four other activities:

1. Empathizing. If others are happy, share their joy. If there is deep tragedy in their lives, stop everything and weep with them (Rom. 12:15).
2. Comforting. We have gone through so much ourselves and those experiences give us the richness as leaders to be able to comfort others when they go through the same pain (see 2 Cor. 1:3-4).
3. Carrying burdens. This is the way we "fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).
4. Encouraging. Let people know often they are doing a good job. Look for the good and point it out, and you'll see more and more good come from your colleagues. 'Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing' (1 Thess. 5:11)" (549-550).

### **3. Affirm and praise people when they need it.**

Absence of affirmation is a third bad habit to avoid. People thrive on affirmation and praise. As Finzel claims, "We wildly underestimate the power of the tiniest personal touch of kindness." So we must "Learn to read the varying levels of affirmation your people need" (471-472). Finzel observes that "Christian organizations are sometimes the worst, because there is the attitude that 'they are working for God, and he will reward them for their labors.' Some even argue that it builds egos to give men praise, therefore, it is unspiritual and is to be avoided at all costs" (483-484). Leaders must learn the varying levels of affirmation their people need. Finzel recognizes these people as:

Desperados ...can't get enough praise and good strokes. They are desperate for approbation. Up-and-downers ...go along just fine with

little need of attention. But then she will enter into an emotional valley. 'Normal' people ...come from stable homes and may not need as much affirmation as others. Autopilots ...the few people who really do not need any encouragement; "all we need to do is cultivate kindness." (509-533)

As Paul told the Thessalonians, "...we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone" (1 Thess. 5:14).<sup>5</sup> Poor leaders demand a great deal from people and never give them a pat on the back for a job well done. Effective leaders realize that most people are motivated more by affirmation and encouragement (562-563). Paul White refers to several key components for employees to think and feel they are appreciated. These include:

1. Effective recognition and appreciation must be individualized and delivered personally.
2. Appreciation needs to be communicated using the recipients' preferred appreciation language.
3. A challenge to effective appreciation is we tend to communicate to others in ways that are most meaningful to us.
4. Acts of appreciation need to be viewed as valuable by the recipient.
5. For appreciation to be effective and believable, it must be communicated regularly.
6. Appreciation needs to be communicated in a way that is perceived as authentic by the recipient.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. Allow room for *mavericks*.

A maverick is an independent individual with a pioneer spirit. *Webster's Dictionary* defines a "maverick" as, "an independent individual who does not go along with a group." *Webster's* synonyms for maverick include "dissident," "dissenting," "heretical," and "nonconformist".<sup>7</sup> Jesus was a maverick and was eventually destroyed by the institutional religious body he came to redeem (641-642). "Mavericks are free spirits that have always been misunderstood. This is as true in the Church as it is in the business world." (584-586). But not all troublemakers and malcontents are true mavericks. As Finzel observes:

Some are just a pain to have around and don't do anyone much good. So it is important to learn to recognize and reward properly the mavericks in our midst. Legitimate mavericks who can bring you into the future: care not just for their own ideas but for the goals of the organization; are making a difference in their present position; are willing to earn the right to be heard; are influencing others and producing good results.

<sup>5</sup> Unless stated otherwise, Biblical quotations are from the New International Version.

<sup>6</sup> Paul E. White. "Unhappy? Low Morale? Try the 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace," *Journal of Christian Nursing* Vol. 29 July - September (2012): 146-147.

<sup>7</sup> "Maverick" in the Online *Webster's Dictionary* from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/maverick> accessed 24 January 2013.

How can the Church encourage the true mavericks who can help it? Finzel suggests: (1) give them a long tether - they need space to soar, (2) put them in charge of something they can really own, (3) listen to their ideas and give them time to grow, (4) let them work on their own if they wish, (5) leave them alone and give them time to blossom (694-697).

He further observes, "Mavericks can save from the slide toward institutionalism. They bring the future. Over time our man made organizations grow old, rigid and tired, just like we humans do. The pioneering spirit of mavericks can stop that slide and turn it around." Unfortunately, "Large organizations usually kill off mavericks before they can take root. The larger and older an organization gets, the more it tends to reject creative types. We have to learn how to cultivate pioneers among us." Mavericks are misunderstood because "they make messes by their very nature", but these are "the good messes institutions need" because "institutions become too organized for their own good, and thus have a hard time accepting the disruption that change agents bring." These messes are especially needed to give "a rebirth at middle age". Nevertheless, it is important to discover the truly useful mavericks since some people simply love to complain. Finzel recognizes that the useful mavericks "do not just cause trouble, but rather truly want to make a difference". Thus "we need to create space in our organizations for these beneficial mavericks to flourish" (707-709).

### **5. Get rid of dictatorship in decision-making.**

As Finzel observes, "Dictators take the fun out of life and break the human spirit that longs to soar with achievement." How do dictators operate? They are easily recognized because:

1. They hoard decisions.
2. They view truth and wisdom as primarily their domain.
3. They restrict decisions to an elite group.
4. They surprise their workers with edicts from above. (878)

Another label for the dictatorial style of leadership is what Finzel calls the "apostolic" view of decision making in the Church. These leaders claim to have special knowledge or anointing that gives them the inside edge on truth: "I know the answers, because I have been given special insight, knowledge, and position. Therefore, I will determine our direction, for I am the leader and I know best" (719).

However as S. Gumbe of the University of Zimbabwe observes, "Today, leadership is increasingly associated not with command and control but with the concept of inspiration, of getting along with other people and creating a mission with which others can identify."<sup>8</sup> So, how can the Church overcome dictatorial leadership? Finzel notes moving beyond the "I know all the answers" attitude is required. The alternative to dictatorial decision-making is

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<sup>8</sup> S. Gumbe, "Leadership Skills," *The African Executive* Issue 273 (14-20 July 2010): 1.

team leadership. *Webster's Dictionary* defines "team" as "a number of persons associated together in work or activity".<sup>9</sup> Finzel contends that,

Moving to teams has liberated management and harnessed the power of more and more creative energy at every level. Leadership is teamwork, coaching, creativity-and the synergy of a group of people inspired by their leader. The apostolic style stands at the opposite end of the continuum from the leader who sees his primary role as managing the resources of a team. The apostle sees truth as having come down from on high. The apostle knows the battle plan and where the team will go. It is the team's responsibility to implement the dreams and visions that were singularly presented to the leader (836-841).

Finzel advocates "flat" organizational structures for the Church because these are the model of the future. He concludes:

Though there are many ways to draw organizational charts, people today prefer to work in flat organizations without huge bureaucracies over their heads. Young workers especially prefer a shorter distance between the front lines and the CEO. Top down pyramids are a thing of the past! (891-893).

Leaders of flat organizational structures may be referred to as facilitators. How do facilitators lead? They are readily recognized because:

1. They delegate decisions.
2. They involve others as much as possible.
3. They view truth and wisdom as being distributed throughout the organization.
4. They are developers.
5. They see people as their greatest resources for ideas that will bring success.
6. They give their people space to make decisions.
7. They let those who are responsible decide how jobs will be done. When the best leader's work is done, the people will say, "We did it ourselves!" (879-882).

Today's church leaders must work together with their teams in order to draw out ideas and organize them. "Unless there is goal ownership, there will never be strong support for the leader. The leader will ultimately have to steer the group into fulfilling the mission, but what that mission is should be determined together by the key players of the team" (825-882). Nevertheless, it is important to heed some words of caution from Gumbe:

Effective leaders do not use one leadership style in isolation of other styles. Leaders adjust their styles to the operative situation ... national culture is certainly an important situational variable in determining which leadership style is the most effective. National culture of subordinates can affect leadership style. A leader cannot choose his/

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<sup>9</sup> "Team" in the Online *Webster's Dictionary* from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/team>, accessed 24 January 2013.

her style at will. What is feasible depends on the cultural conditioning of a leader's subordinates.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, Gumbe provides several significant examples that church leaders may consider:

... a manipulative, autocratic or directive style is compatible with high power distance. Power distance rankings should also be good indicators of employee willingness to accept participative leadership. Participation is likely to be most effective in lower power distance culture. An achievement-oriented style that is focused on setting challenging goals and expects employees to perform at their highest levels, is likely to be most effective in cultures where uncertainty avoidance is low.<sup>11</sup>

## **6. Develop clean delegation habits.**

A sixth bad habit, dirty delegation, involves refusing to relax and let go. Finzel categorizes this as "over-managing", and labels it as "one of the great cardinal sins of poor leadership". He remarks that, "Nothing frustrates those who work for you more than sloppy delegation with too many strings attached." But there are numerous reasons why delegation is hard to do well. These include: (1) fear of losing authority, (2) fear of work being done poorly, (3) fear of work being done better, (4) unwillingness to take the necessary time, (5) fear of depending on others, (6) lack of leadership training and positive delegation experience, (7) fear of losing value in the organization (912-935).

Jesus delegated to his disciples the fulfillment of the Great Commission—spreading the word about God's love. He prepared them well and then turned them loose. However, delegation must match each worker's follow-through ability. Jesus not only gave them an important job to do, He promised to follow up on that delegation with his presence: "...surely I am with you always..." (Matthew 28:20). He was going to hold his followers accountable, but he also intended to encourage them along the way. This is an excellent practice of delegation (893-895). Finzel's five key ingredients for clean delegation are:

1. Have faith in the one to whom you delegate.
2. Release the desire to do it "better" yourself.
3. Relax from the obsession that it has to be done your way.
4. Practice patience in the desire to do it faster yourself.
5. Vision to develop others by delegating (1044-1046).

Besides these key ingredients, Finzel provides nine guidelines for clean delegation:

1. Choose qualified people.
2. Exhibit confidence.
3. Make their duties clear.
4. Delegate the proper authority.

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<sup>10</sup> Gumbe, "Leadership Skills," 6.

<sup>11</sup> Gumbe, "Leadership Skills," 6.

5. Do not tell them how to do the work.
6. Set up accountability points along the way.
7. Supervise according to their follow-through style.
8. Give them room to fail occasionally.
9. Give praise and credit for work well done (1046-1048).

## **7. Cure communication chaos.**

A seventh bad habit church leaders must avoid is communication chaos. Leaders should never assume that anyone knows anything. In fact, the bigger the group, the more attention must be given to communication. It is important to remember that when left in the dark, people tend to dream up wild rumors. Therefore, communication must be the passionate obsession of effective church leadership (1058-1060). Finzel has observed that as organizations grow from small entrepreneurs into professionally managed organizations, communication must be given more attention and must become more formal (1086-1087).

Finzel outlines a communication pattern from birth, through adolescence, to maturity:

Oral	to	Written
Informal	to	Formal
Spontaneous	to	Planned
Active	to	Passive
Lively	to	Liturgical

As organizations grow, the original group of founders can become an inside elite. Since they were there from the beginning, they have the most information and power (1098-1099). Thus, it becomes important for church leaders to put the strategic plan in writing, so all can sign off on it and then use that body of knowledge to orient each new member of the leadership group (1117-1118). The higher one goes in leadership, the more sensitive one must be about everything communicated. This is what Finzel refers to as becoming aware of "communication linkages." Every time a phone call is made or a letter is written or a decision is made, the leader needs to ask: "What people are affected by this decision/letter/memo/directive? What are the linkages?" Finzel admonishes leaders to "Think of all the people who need to be informed when a decision is made" (1123-1126). What are some of the reasons why it is hard for leaders to communicate to everyone in the organization? Finzel comments that leaders fail to inform and listen to others because they have: too little time, too many people to supervise, too much pressure, too much physical distance between leaders and followers, too much knowledge to patiently listen to followers who discover things the leaders already know, too much pride to listen to others, and communication overload (1155-1166).

How does one know if the organization has communication chaos? Finzel guides the church leader to ask how many of the following symptoms are present in their organization: (1) chaos and confusion about the group's direction, (2) arguments or disagreements about priorities, (3) duplication of

effort, (4) waste of resources through jobs that get canceled midstream, (5) conflicts among departments, (6) poor morale, (7) poor productivity, (8) idleness of resource, (9) job insecurity (1229-1231).

How can church leaders overcome chaos? Finzel offers a number of good suggestions:

1. Have regular press conferences with your people. Let them hear your heart. Allow them to ask you tough questions.
2. Keep memos brief. Include one-page summaries on the top of lengthy reports. Use faxes and e-mail to keep communication fresh and up to the minute.
3. Produce a concise written statement of vision and objectives that can be distributed throughout your organization.
4. Have stand-up meetings to avoid lengthy discussions.
5. Read *Death by Meeting* by Patrick Lencioni to learn how to do meetings right.
6. Develop an in-house newsletter for weekly communication to the insiders.
7. As the leader, cast the vision to insiders as much as you do to outsiders.
8. Have face time with your leaders.
9. Play and pray with those you lead.
10. Schedule regular off-site meetings for team development that include play as well as work.
11. Make internal communications a top priority of your job.
12. Keep your followers informed as to what you expect of them.
13. Find ways to articulate and communicate vision and values.
14. Make sure that formal communication systems are in place.
15. Avoid the great surprise. Don't ambush people who are not doing their jobs well. Be honest.
16. MbWA: Manage by Wandering Around. Get out of your office, but be sensitive to others achieving their goals/don't interrupt another's work flow.
17. Find ways to tap into the underground within your organization. Have informants.
18. Practice HOT communication: Honest, Open, and Transparent. Nothing happens until people talk (1232-1252).

## **8. Understand, cultivate and improve an organization's corporate culture.**

Missing the clues of corporate culture is an eighth bad habit for church leaders to avoid. An organization's corporate culture is the way insiders behave based on the values and group traditions that they hold. This should be a top leadership priority. Expressed simply it is "the way we do things around here". Leaders should never underestimate the mighty power of their organization's culture. With this in mind Finzel declares, "cultivating and changing the culture should be one of leadership's top priorities." However, leaders must respect values different from their own (1266-1267). *Webster's Dictionary* defines "culture" as:

The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations; the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; *also*: the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time <popular culture>

<southern *culture*>; the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.<sup>12</sup>

Finzel defines *culture* simply as the unique customs, values, and artifacts of people (1317-1319) and shows that strong cultures contribute to organizational success when the culture supports the mission, goals, and strategy of the organization. He affirms:

The pursuit of excellence is certainly something that anyone involved in leading a Christian organization ought to be about. The Bible compels us to do whatever we do to the glory of God: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:3 1). "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17). Later, Paul states, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (vv. 23-24). (1324-1329).

It is helpful to distinguish "values" from "beliefs". Finzel offers several samples of how *values* (preferences) and *beliefs* (moral absolutes) differ:

**Preferences**

Tastes

Regional/Cultural

Methodology/Not Theology

**Moral Absolutes**

Black/White

Ethical Issues

Right and Wrong Matters (1344)

Finzel admonishes: "As a leader, spend some time alone and really think about your own values and beliefs. Then work with your leadership team and list the values and beliefs your whole team believes in. This list will become the unmitigated glue that holds your team together like layers in a sheet of plywood" (1362-1363). As Finzel observes: "Successful leaders learn how to harness the culture of their group for the common good." He warns:

Never underestimate the mighty power of your organization's culture. It is impossible to initiate change in an organization without first understanding its culture. Cultivating and changing culture should be one of leadership's top priorities. Changing the culture in an organization takes a Herculean effort over many years, but it can be done. It is through those efforts that real lasting change takes root. Learn to respect values different from your own. Values are relative, beliefs are absolute. Learning the difference is an essential task for leaders as they learn to sift through their corporate culture. Sometimes we must learn to give up on the smaller issues so we can affect the larger ones. (1482-1486).

<sup>12</sup> "Culture" in the Online *Webster's Dictionary* from

<http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/culture>, accessed 24 January 2013.

## **9. Plan for successors as well as for success.**

The ninth mistake to avoid is success without successors. Would be successful Christian leaders end up being failures when they fail to prepare the way for their successors. Finzel reveals a number of barriers to grooming a successor: (1) lack of intrinsic job security or the need for job security, (2) insecurity about what to do next, (3) fear of retirement, (4) resistance to change, (5) comfort inflated/job-associated self-worth or inferior self-esteem, (6) the work role is your whole life, (7) lack of confidence, (8) thinking no one else can do the job like you do, (9) love for the job, (10) loving your leadership role, (11) potential loss of further investment, pension, (12) ceasing the human investment and not wanting to let it go or simply, (13) fear (1571-1573).

Good leaders recognize that preparing potential successors requires mentoring. But, what makes a good mentor? Finzel recognizes six common characteristics:

1. The ability to readily see potential in a person
2. Tolerance of mistakes, brashness, abrasiveness, and the like in order to see that potential develop
3. Flexibility in responding to people
4. Patience: knowing that time and experience are needed for development
5. Perspective: having the vision and ability to see down the road and to suggest the next steps a mentee needs to take
6. Gifts and abilities that build up and encourage others.

How do mentors go about their job of mentoring? Finzel's investigation has uncovered several important specifics. Mentors give: (1) timely advice, (2) letters, articles, books, or other literature to offer perspective, (3) finances, (4) freedom to emerge as a leader even beyond the level of the mentor, (5) mentors risk their own reputations in order to sponsor a mentee, (6) mentors model various aspects of leadership functions to challenge mentees to move toward them, (7) mentors direct mentees to needed resources that will further develop them, (8) mentors co-minister with mentees in order to increase their confidence, status, and credibility (1628-1634).

## **10. Focus on the future.**

The final bad habit for church leaders to avoid is the failure to focus on the future. Finzel observes, "The future is rushing rapidly at us. A leader's concentration must not be on the past nor on the present, but on the future." Therefore, "Leadership must always be devoting itself to the issue of goals and strategies." As Finzel points out the emerging generations "have lost confidence in the hierarchical processes of government, church, education, and business." Today's "younger people are just not interested in investing their lives in the maintenance of fostering of our old institutional structures. They want to go where the action is, they want to make a difference, they want to work in new flat organizations, and they want to be in control of their destinies." Finzel's research reveals that, "The new generations insist on participation in a networking relationship throughout their organization. They

prefer a highly decentralized, grassroots approach to problem solving" (1754-1757).

One of the primary responsibilities of leadership is creating vision and direction for the future. Successful leaders plan for the future. They direct or head the team in developing organizational goals, plans, and strategies that flow out of a crisp purpose or vision statement. (1842-1844). So, why do church leaders fail to focus on the future? Part of the answer lies in their *inability to accept change*. However, as Finzel points out that, "Change is inevitable; to not change is a sure sign of imminent extinction." Thus, "Leaders who don't change with the changing climate of our future world will, like dinosaurs, find themselves only a museum attraction." Unfortunately, as Finzel observes, "By nature we resist change. Most of us find it hard to see new trends developing in our chosen fields. People are quick to criticize innovations, because the changes frighten them." (1766-1769).

A second reason leaders may fail to focus on the future lies in trying to survive the *tyranny of the urgent*. This fights against planning and thinking time, and when leaders fail to make the time to plan for the future, they become its victims. They develop a style of reactionary leadership instead of the proactive leadership that anticipates the future (1791-1792). Proactive leaders devote themselves to goals and strategies. They ask, "Where are we going next, and why are we going there?" (1801).

A third reason leaders fail to focus on the future involves the level of their *ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn*. Finzel has observed two ways to approach the future, either as "learners" or as "closed experts". The opposite of the learner is the "know-it-all", whose type of management has the attitude of having mastered the trade. For this leader, "The old way is not only the best way, but really the only way." Finzel calls this the "pro attitude" wherewith leaders convey: "We're the pros at this; others can look to us and see how it ought to be done." Christian organizations have added to this a "paralysis of hiding behind their spiritual views - theologizing their methodology". Finzel chides, "The years of organizational tradition become a sacred cow that cannot and should not be tampered with. After all, it was created by our spiritual forefathers, who were led by God to create the organization we now inherit" (1815-1822).

Finzel insists that today's leaders must study the future and become "futurists" in their particular discipline. He advocates, "The future is the focus of an effective leader." In fact, Finzel asserts, "To neglect the future is the biggest mistake a leader can make. Above mentoring, communicating, and paying attention to people, a leader must obsess about the future." Vision is essential to every effective church leader. Finzel insists that, "Businesses and churches need these kinds of dreamers to stay relevant in a changing world." He urges the church to not only "recruit dreamers" but also to spend time as leaders dreaming about what could be (1890-1894).

## Conclusion

This paper does not conclude with remarks by Hans Finzel nor with much personal comment from this writer. African leaders can evaluate Finzel's "Ten Mistakes" for themselves. Rather it offers words of wisdom from Henry and Richard Blackaby's book, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*:

Modern history is once again calling upon men and women to rise up and fulfill their God-given destiny to impact their world. True spiritual leaders do not wring their hands and wistfully recount the better times of days gone by. Genuine leaders understand they have but one life to live and so they expend it with purpose and passion. God placed you on the earth at this particular crossroad in history. You live in a time of great challenges but enormous opportunity. May you live, and lead, well.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Henry and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*. Kindle Edition, (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group), 2011, 28.