



What Drives Us?

Jan Paulsen, *With – Where Are We Going*, Pacific Press, 2011.

Motivation for church leadership is a complex thing.

- It is unlikely to make you rich, and there are probably easier routes to fame.
- In the vast majority of cases, men and woman choose to give their lives to the church they love for other reasons – reasons that are pure and idealistic.
- Unfortunately, our idealism usually lives side by side with our humanity, so our inconsistencies and weaknesses have a tendency to corrode that which is wholesome and good. The life of an Adventist leader is often a struggle between these two conflicting parts of our nature.

Profile of a leader:

1 – Outstanding Adventist leaders have transparent motives:

- There will always be motives, and they will always display themselves along the way.
- What is it that drives me to take this particular stand?
- Is it a “Thus saith the Lord”? Are you sure?
- What about your colleagues in leadership who are also following the Lord? How do they see it?
- Am I just not wanting to rock the boat?
- It is pay time for a deal I've made with some segment of the church?
- Am I pandering to a vocal or powerful part of the congregation?
- Am I being led by my desire to show that I am in charge?
- “Leadership in the church is not immune to acting from ‘smelly,’ unworthy motives, so we must beware of selling our souls.
- It's critically important that we're as open and honest as we can be about our motives, for this defines integrity, which is at the heart of leadership.

2 – Outstanding Adventist leaders have nothing to prove:

- “You’re in charge as long as you don’t have to prove it.”
- Our self-image can distort and corrupt our leadership.
- What weight and size do we give ourselves?
- Good church leadership will always have an element of softness or gentleness in it, which perhaps is a simple by-product of humility.

3 – Outstanding Adventist leaders “read” the community:

- What are the needs, hopes and hurts of the group?
- What do they expect from their leader?
- Listen – really listen
- Do our colleagues feel ‘safe’ when they are talking to us?
- Do we keep their confidence?
- It’s more important for church leaders to pay attention to what others are saying than it is for them to speak.
- Human beings are vastly more important than any policy or position statement. God and people have to be the end points for every policy statement.
- God will save people, not policy statements.
- “The mark of good leadership is an ability to inspire people to work for you even if they’re not obligated to.”
- We must never take their presence, their engagement, their financial support, their interest and their time for granted.

4 - Outstanding Adventist leaders have the humility to be led:

- The most significant ingredient of successful leadership in the church is the humility to let God’s Spirit lead.
- We shouldn’t spiritualize the experience of the Spirit’s leading to such an extent that we leave the intellect barren. Spirit and mind don’t occupy two different worlds. A leader owes it to God and to His people to make every effort to hold them together.
- Wise leaders will seek the Spirit’s leading by private prayer and reaching out for the counsel of their colleagues.

5 – Outstanding Adventist leaders can handle change:

- Change is a reality.

- People who can't understand the implications of change and deal with it within our church's framework of unchanging values and truths cannot lead.
- "Yet, I have encountered and worked with leaders who have an unbelievable and irrational resistance to change. It's as though they believe change of any kind is apostasy or will lead to it. This is a brittle and dangerous leadership posture that threatens their survival in the church."
- If as leaders we close our minds to new ideas, we become a hindrance to the church's progress toward fulfilling the mission. We become mere protectors of "the way things have always been," and we lose sight of what it means to be leaders of God's people now.
- What we did was how God led us, but is this still the best way to do it now, and will it be so tomorrow? A leader must have the courage to ask those questions and to allow others to examine the matter openly, without feeling threatened.

6 – Outstanding Adventist leaders realize they're not always right:

- No church pastor or administration knows and understands everything. "This is such an obvious point, it seems hardly worth making – except for the fact that some leaders behave as though they do."
- Leaders need to reach out, seek wise counsel and be genuinely open to new and different ways of thinking.
- Our strength as leaders is increased by our willingness to acknowledge our limitations and seek input – even from those who hold quite different points of view.
- There is a sacred responsibility to stay as close as they know how to the inspired message of the Lord. We must take great care not to come adrift from that anchorage.
- "The church community will lose confidence very quickly in a leader who, by word or conduct, discredits the revealed will of God."

7 – Outstanding Adventist leaders are humble and faithful:

- Nothing will compensate for the lack of these two factors.
- Love the people including the frailty of the human condition with its multiple short comings and gone-astray theology.
- You must love your church.
- Live a life of love.