

# From the Editor's Desk

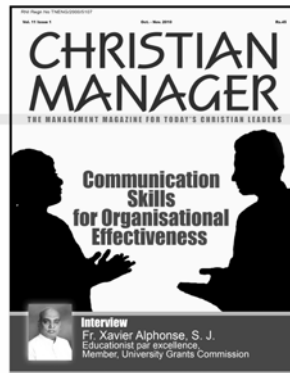
# CHRISTIAN MANAGER

In the past few months many readers have been asking us to post all the back issues of Christian Manager on CIM 's website. There are readers who would like to avail all the print editions of our back issues or at least some of the more popular ones. We've exhausted copies of most of the print editions. We've been around for a little over a decade now and finding PDFs for all the back issues would be quite a challenging task. However, there are few articles from the back issues we'd want to republish again through our web presence. Our IT department is bending over backwards to provide innovate and very useful online management content to our readers. Be on the lookout for this in the days to come.

There are couple of subscribers who've voiced their complaint regarding the non receipt of few issues of the magazine. This may be due to the wrong address typed in because of the illegible handwriting on the M.O. slips. In other cases the subscriber's change of address was not sufficiently notified to us. We did have some problems with the software in the previous years but we've more or less rectified the serious technical flaws in the software. Those who haven't received a copy or two kindly let us know about this as soon as possible so that you don't miss out

many issues. Do bear with us as we streamline this problem. When subscribing or renewing your subscriptions we request you to please note down the details in block letters along with your email and phone number.

This issue features three articles on communication which are more practical than theoretical. Sam Thambusamy writes about the role of communication in leadership. Dr. Easo John gives a brief but broad analysis of what communication entails in order to be effective. His focus is on verbal communication. We have extracted a chapter from Prof. Jeyakar Chellaraj's helpful book Transformation Communication and published it in this issue. We trust you would find the articles useful.



In 2008 we had interviewed Fr. Xavier Alphonse who played a pivotal role in the community college movement in India. The interview had a telling impact on our readers. Some had even set up a college as a result of our coverage on community college system. In this edition, we interview him again, this time as member of the University Grants Commission. There's no doubt that Fr. Xavier is an educationist of international stature and many more need to get a glimpse of his vision for higher education in India.

**Bennet Emmanuel**

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# COMMUNICATION

## Back 2 Basics

**Sam Thambusamy**

**A**n effective organization needs good communication. If the objectives are well understood by all its members then “*What to do*”, “*How to do it*”, “*When to do it*” and “*Where to do it*” etc. will be clear. Members need to know if adequate progress has been made to reach towards the desired goals. Good communication is what holds an organization together. But, Communication is easier said than done.

### **Information is not communication**

Information is not to be confused with communication. We assume that if a person we are working with had the same facts (information) that we have, then s/he will probably see the same facts (information) as we do. But, most of the time, they don't.

Sometimes what you say is not what is understood. People do not see the facts in the same way as the speaker (SENDER) because they are conditioned to see certain things in a certain way. We all look at the world through different set of eyes. We see different things in the same facts (information). The “idea/message” is affected by several factors such as: the context within which it is said, who is saying it, previous experience, feelings and the receiver's self-image.

The information is merely a raw material that the receiver works with. We need to understand the process of communication to understand how the audience (RECEIVER) understands it.

### **The process of Communication**

Communication is a process. It begins

when an “idea” or a “message” is sent from a “Speaker” (SENDER) to the Audience (RECEIVER). It is wrong to assume that Communication has taken place if the audience (RECEIVER) hears/reads everything. Communication occurs only when a meaning is assigned to the content.

Unfortunately, unintended meanings get assigned sometimes to our messages. This is because of several factors (both internal and external) that affect the way we see/hear things. When the audience (RECEIVER) attaches unintended meanings to the message there is mis-communication. The message (and the sender) is misunderstood.

Worse, on the basis of this (mis) understanding, a response

(FEEDBACK) is made.



That is why it is important to repeat our message, preferably in another form, to see if the audience (RECEIVER) understands the originally intended idea/message.

### Unlocking Communication

How does understanding the process of communication help a Christian leader? An understanding of the process helps the leader to effectively engage in communication.

A Christian leader needs to be careful on two counts:

⇒ Firstly, several Christian leaders have been nurtured in a culture where abstract ideas are held to have meaning in themselves. For example “Thus says the Lord” kind of messages. These pronouncements do silence fellow believers.

⇒ Secondly, several Christian leaders assume that they are understood because of our roots in a common faith. People may not openly question our “motives” or “actions”. But, in reality they may have divergent view points opinions that they keep to themselves.

It is important for a leader to ‘unlock’ communication. He must make an effort to build good communication with others and one another within the organization.

The first step is to build communication

around objectives. We can build excellent communication bridges just by spelling out clear, realizable and communicable objectives. Real objectives – ones that have real dates for accomplishment, real people assigned to carry them out, and real measurements of accomplishments – are less likely to cause mis-communication. It is usually vague “purposes” that cause miscommunication.

So a leader must analyze the individuals and groups who s/he needs to communicate and build communication around objectives. Talking about what is to be done has a way of reducing areas of misunderstanding. The leader must be careful to identify milestones towards progress, agreed times of reporting, needed decisions, problems encountered and anticipated plans.

### Build a feedback system

A leader must encourage the staff to report regularly about the progress of the organization. He must

**It is important for a leader to ‘unlock’ communication. He must make an effort to build good communication with others and one another within the organization.**

encourage the staff not to just report “what happened”. He must seek good reports.

A good report is one which tells the leader

- a) What steps have been taken?
- b) what has been done?
- c) what decisions are needed?
- d) what problems are foreseen?
- e) what is planned for the immediate future?

There is no point in telling everyone the barn door was left open after the horse is gone.

### Fight Gossip: Establish Regular Channels

Gossip and rumor find a ready ear if the group members don’t believe they are in the know how. It is important to keep the group members in the loop. Most often the group members need a lot of background information to make sense of what is currently happening in the organization.

So weekly new bulletins, special announcements on events, progress, a monthly letter/e-mail from the leader giving his assessment and other forms of internal communication meet this important need. An effective leader must make sure that local organization news items are compiled and circulated.

### Recognize different Levels of Communication

It is important to communicate news and keep everyone informed. This immediately raises the question, “ How much do I need to communicate?” There’s no point in giving everyone all the details if only a few need to know all the details. It is important that we ask questions such as:

- a) Who needs to know?
- b) What group / department / Individuals?
- c) What do they need to know?

The leader must take time to break the communication into appropriate packages.

### **The means of Communication**

Next, the leader must consider how he will make the communication – Phone Call, Letter, E-mail, Memo, Presentation etc. It is important that we remember the transfer of meaning in the process of communication.

### **Repetition**

We all talk of efficiency and avoiding duplication. Lyle Schaller points to Communication as the one area where duplication and redundancy needs to be practiced. This is because individuals differ tremendously in how they receive ideas/messages. Some are readers. Some are listeners. Some are always seeking data. Some others tune off to internal communication most of the time. We must recognize these and make sure that we communicate our ideas/messages to all of them in an appropriate manner.

### **Internal Communication**

Internal communication is important. The life blood of an organization (particularly a volunteer organization) is its members. They need to be informed, instructed, motivated and

listened to. This does involve a lot of money and energy. Many local churches spend a lot of money on projects but they have little or no money to educate and inform the very members who support these projects. The leader must make sure that he makes budgetary allowance for internal communication

### **Educate People to Communicate Better**

Communication can be learnt and developed. Some of us need to learn how to listen better. While others need to discover how people are hearing them. It takes practice. But if we learn to listen better and discover how people understand then we will establish better communication bridges.

One valuable exercise to improve our communication is self-evaluation of meetings. At the end of a meeting, you may discuss a few questions that relate to communication. Questions such as: Did it serve its purpose? Did people understand each other? How could this be improved? You will be surprised to find the blocks to communication.

Sometimes, it is helpful to have one person observe the discussion and giving an evaluation at the end of the meeting. Alternatively, you could get

your staff trained in communication skills over a period of time.

### **Give it time**

Generally, people who know each other communicate much more effectively. Those who work together find it easier to meet and communicate with one another. However, volunteers meet each other as and when the task may require. This may make the communication a bit difficult.

A leader must search for ways to build knowledge and understand one another. This may require some group interaction before every business meeting. Some organizations have effectively used the idea of breaking the total group into smaller groups to pray for each other's needs.

With the rapid pace of changes in society that face us on every hand there never was a greater need to put a major effort into communication. The pay off in increased organizational and individual effectiveness is extremely high.

*Sam Thambusamy speaks and writes on contemporary culture and faith engagement. He is an active blogger and teaches theology and communications in South India Biblical Seminary, Bangalore.*

CM

## **India is ranked 119 in human development parameters**

A Wake-up Call: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) finds India having abysmal record in human development parameters. India is ranked 119. Norway is number one, while the fourth place goes to US. Russia is in 68; Brazil in 73 while China is in 98.

Gross National Income per capita is USD 3337 for India while it is 58810 for Norway; 47084 for US; 15258 for Russia; 10607 for Brazil and 7258 for China. In the case of education, the mean years of schooling is 12.6 for Norway;

12.4 for US; 8.8 for Russia; 7.2 for Brazil; 7.5 for China and 4.4 for India. 1.3% of Russia; 8.5 of Brazil; 12.5% of China and 55.4% of India's population are considered poor. Life expectancy at birth: Norway 81; US 79.6; china 73.5; Brazil 72.9; 67.2 Russia and 64.4 India. Expenditure on health per capita in USD: Norway 4763; US 7285; Russia 797; Brazil 837; China 233 and India 109.

*Business Today 28 November 2010, p. 30-31.*



# COMMUNICATION AND THE SPOKEN WORD

**Dr. Easo John**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

An effective leader, whether it be of a team or a large organization needs to be able to communicate through the spoken word, and the written word. A supervisor, it has been estimated speaks 40,000 words in the course of a day's work. If the employee is not always clear on what the supervisor wants, it is not for lack of volume of words. It is crucial for good leadership or effective management to understand and follow the basic principles of good communication. The very first principle is to understand the importance of good communication.

## 1.1 What is Communication?

Communication takes place when a message is transmitted from one person to another and the sender and the receiver understand the message the same way. The message may consist of information, or ideas or thoughts and opinions. It may be a simple matter of conveying an attitude. Irrespective of its nature, there is no assurance that a message is interpreted by the receiver the same way as the sender. If the interpretation is different from what the sender intended it to convey, it becomes a case of 'miscommunication'. The effectiveness of a communication is something else, but equally important. A communication can be considered

effective, if the receiver takes the action that was expected by the sender. Successful communication has therefore two aspects. It has to be perceived correctly and it should result in the expected action.

## 1.2 Types of Communication.

The most common types of communication we are concerned with are the verbal and written. Verbal communications are a continuous phenomenon, at the home, at the work place, on the road. They may be face to face, over the telephone or from one person to many. The verbal communication is often casual and the

initiator does not often give them much planning or thought. More important are verbal communications, deliberate and intended to serve a purpose. We will revert to this in later paragraphs.

Written communications range from letters to reports including minutes of

communication. This is true between individuals, from individual to group, among groups and from individuals to large audiences. In spite of these varied circumstances, the verbal communications have common pitfalls and similar requirements to enhance their effectiveness.

its regional or social level nuances. In addition, the expression and gestures may emphasize or distort the actual message being conveyed.

In several languages the second person, singular or plural are the same. In English “You” is you. However in many other languages the second person in singular is used only to an inferior or in contempt. The more respectable word even to one person is plural; or a different word is used. For example, in Hindi, use of ‘*Tu*’ would be rude, ‘*Aap*’ would be polite; In tamil or Malayalam ‘*Nee*’ is singular, rude. The acceptable word would be ‘*Ningal*’. Punjabi has ‘*tu*’ verses ‘*tusi*’. (Interestingly enough, in Southern Unites States, one often comes across ‘you all’ in addressing one person.)

Misdirection can occur just as easily in written words.

**If people cannot understand each other, they cannot work in coordination and consequently cannot achieve anything. No leader or team can hope to do their best unless their communications are clear.**

meetings, proposals and pamphlets or books.

Non verbal communications, gestures, voice modulation, play a significant part in effective communication.

### 1.3 Importance of Good Communication.

Genesis, Chapter 11, verses 1 to 9 tells the story of “tower of Babel”. There is no stronger or better illustration of the importance of communication. If people cannot understand each other, they cannot work in coordination and consequently cannot achieve anything. No leader or team can hope to do their best unless their communications are clear.

### 1.4 The Spoken Word.

The spoken word continues to be the overwhelming mode of

## 2.0 OBSTACLES – AVOIDING THEM.

“When I use a word, it means just what I want it to mean” (Humpty Dumpty to Alice, in ‘Alice in Wonderland’)

### 2.1 Language.

Very often we tend to assume that the receiver is getting the correct perception. (What do you mean? You did not understand? You speak English (or Hindi, or French, whatever) don’t you?) But does he really speak the same language? It may not be a difference between English and Russian. Very often there are subtle nuances which are missed. Some words have different meanings in different regions or different context. “A homely girl” in England would mean a girl who would take care of household and family. In the US the same expression is a polite ‘ugly’. Every language has

### 2.2 Not Knowing the Audience.

If it is a one to one communication, it is very important to know ‘who’ you are talking to. This may not always be possible, but it is always worth the effort. Many sales training programs start with ‘know your customer’. In spite of that I am amazed at the number of requests for personal presentation on some new scheme by some reputed organizations where the representative turns up, opens up his laptop and then asks “And, Sir, what business are you in”?

The more you know of the person the easier it is to communicate. Most people like themselves. For example, their names are important to them. You greet some one by a wrong name (even badly accented) and you have lost the first round! Arthur Watson who was Chairman of IBM World Trade Corporation, He invariably carried a folder containing the name of every employee and his personal

details including the name of his wife and children when he visited an office abroad. One can imagine the impact when the Chairman inquired about the welfare of the wife and children, by names, of an employee.

### 2.3 The Group Profile

While communicating to a group it is equally important to know the general profile of the audience. Age, gender, education level, religious affiliations, are important facts to know so that the message is made meaningful to the listeners in general. If something is known of the views of the audience on social or environmental issues, these have to be considered. If the group is heterogeneous, or consists of hostile segments, the task of the communicator is made more difficult. It is better to be carefully prepared.

### 2.4 Prior Knowledge Level

The level of understanding of the audience, one or a group has to be taken into consideration. If the audience has a good knowledge of the subject, a speaker has to be sure that he does not bore them with basics. On the other hand, if the subject is new to most of them, it is important not to go over their head. Assessing the level at which to communicate effectively, to hold the listeners' attention can make a great deal of difference to the effectiveness of a communication and the communicator.

### 3.0 A CLEAR PURPOSE

In verbal or written communications, it goes a long way if the communicator is clear on what the purpose is. Common purposes are, to inform, to impress, to convince, to entertain and to accentuate or initiate action. It is important to shape the message based on the purpose of the speaker or the writer. Meandering speeches where the speaker does not seem to know what he wants to achieve are not uncommon.

### 3.1 To Inform

When the goal is only to inform, the communicator has only to present the facts or ideas or whatever else he is informing his target – person or audience. It implies informing correctly and without bias. Managers often use the phrase “just keep me informed”. It would be wrong to assume that just to inform is a simple matter. A little thought will indicate that the same information can be presented with clarity and logic or in a confusing manner. Organizing information for easy understanding is an art in itself.

### 3.2 To impress

We often find public speakers trying to impress the listener with their own wisdom, knowledge and/or oratorical prowess. Such demonstration of vanity is, in the final analysis, of no lasting benefit to either the speaker or the listeners.

However, when we use the phrase to ‘impress’, we are not referring to this phenomenon at all. We are referring to the speaker wanting to leave an impression on the listeners on the subject that is being explained. The message is transmitted and received, but it is also felt. It stirs and leaves a memory. Many great orators or evangelists are able to do this. Excerpts from the speeches of Churchill during the Second World War are still quoted. It used to be said of President Soekarno of Indonesia that he could make his audience weep or laugh even when they did not quite follow the language. Sometimes great oratory is not essential. President Roosevelt’s ‘fireside chats’ was delivered in a soft low key over the radio. But it is believed to have done much to uphold the morale of the Americans during the economic depression of the thirties.

A key factor is that the speakers are addressing their listeners on subjects which are already matters of deep

concern, such as freedom in Indonesia, the course of the War in Britain or the depression and consequential demoralization in the United States. A preacher speaking of God’s mercy and forgiveness to a troubled audience creates a greater impression than a learned theologian expounding on the finer points of theology.

### 3.3 To Convince

A manager or a team leader is often in a position of having to convince his group of a proposed course of action. It goes beyond understanding and feeling; he wants them to accept his point of view. This is one of the most difficult areas of communication. We face this need often and to get a group to accept is rarely easy. An already established relationship of trust and respect would help, but to present facts and projections in such a way as to convince the listeners that this is the optimum solution is an art.

### 3.4 To Entertain

A speaker may set out to entertain. Two approaches are possible. He may be planning to entertain as an end in itself. Great entertainers over the ages have done just that. Maurice Chevalier once said that his goal in life is to make his audience laugh and forget their worries! However, except for professional entertainers, it cannot be a final objective. There are other occasions when a speaker uses entertaining as a means to break the ice, get the audience relaxed and then move on to present, to impress or convince. Many speakers find that an entertaining opening is a good way to start. But a good speaker or communicator has a collection of his own and a practiced presentation to make sure that the punch line is not missed.

### 3.5 To Accentuate or Initiate Action.

A message to initiate action is more crucial than a message for any other

purpose. To inform, to impress or to convince is rarely an end in itself. It is more likely to be a preliminary step towards initiating an action.

#### 4.0 OPTIMIZING EFFECTIVENESS

Knowing your audience and knowing your purpose clearly helps. However there are other considerations in making communications more effective.

##### 4.1 The First Impact

Capturing the attention of the audience at the start of a discussion or a lecture is often crucial. The same applies to a one-on-one dialogue, but to a lesser degree. In communicating to a group, one must assume that they are, most probably pre-occupied with a host of problems. There is a cluttering of the mind in place. It has to be cut through. We referred earlier to the usefulness of an entertaining opening line. An appropriate joke, well delivered can do just that. Get through to the audience mind. There are other ways of creating the same impact. If there has been a significant event that must have caught the attention of the audience within the previous few days, an appropriate reference can get the attention. The opening lines or opening paragraph has to be well thought out to impact and get full attention.

##### 4.2 Taking the Listener with You

In paragraph 2.4 above we referred to the need to understand the level of comprehension of the subject. Lectures or even discussions should not go over the head of the listener. On the other hand, the listener should not get the impression that the speaker is 'talking down' to them. Speakers often stop and ask "Are you with me? Or Are you following me? This is particularly useful when communication is to

convey information or when the purpose is to impress. It is also a very useful way to ensure that the listener is receiving the message correctly in a one-on-one discussion. An experienced speaker can feel when the audience is not following or understanding what he is expounding.

A very successful public speaker once made a point that when he speaks he concentrates on the facial expression of one or two individuals in the audience and often gets a valuable feed back.

**In the Bible, the use of parables by Jesus gives a good example of a valuable tool in communications. Jesus used illustrations that the listeners could easily understand and appreciate in order to drive home important points.**

In the Bible, the use of parables by Jesus gives a good example of a valuable tool in communications. Jesus used illustrations that the listeners could easily understand and appreciate in order to drive home important points. The use of anecdotes is a very common device used by speakers to illustrate a significant point. The same point simply stated would not have anywhere near the same impact. Next time you are reading the New Testament and come across a parable of Jesus, try to see if the point of the parable, simply stated would have been effective or even comprehensible.

In preparing a talk to a group or a lecture, it is always worth spending time to imagine what experiences in the every day life of the listener could be useful in understanding your point

and making appropriate reference. A good speaker becomes much more effective if he can use references, real to his listeners; Events, incidents that they are familiar with.

##### 4.3 Supporting the Main Points.

It is amazing how often a leader's or manager's communication is based on assertions. It is so, because I said so! Unless adequately, convincingly supported, the assertion sounds pontifical and suggests a superior and even a dictatorial attitude. An assertion should be adequately supported to make it acceptable. This implies clarification, evidence or just amplification. Never assume that an assertion is immediately accepted as self-evident.

One way to support is to use several illustrations as evidence. A statement such as "Life begins at sixty" implies that some achievements are possible after the normal retirement age of sixty. Such an assertion, by itself, raises skeptical looks if not murmurs. But the speaker may go on to add that Benjamin Franklin was a successful ambassador at eighty; Gladstone, a Prime minister of England at eighty-three; Titian was still painting at ninety. A restatement of the same message in a different form may help the listener to take note of it. A restatement does not add anything. It merely reiterates. It can be most effective if properly used at the end of lecture or discussion.

##### 4.4 Explanations

An adequate explanation can follow an assertion. A statement such as "India is a land of great diversity of cultures" leaves the listener with the feeling may be the speaker is right. However a further exposition on the diversity of languages, dresses, food habits,



music, based on illustrations, begins to convince. The listener reacts with, “Oh, yes, he is right”.

A good comparison with something that the audience is familiar with makes it easy to understand and perhaps accept an assertion or new information. Thomas Edison explained the nature of electricity to an audience, curious about the wires being strung over long distance. He suggested they imagine a dachshund (dog with long body) stretched between Edinburgh and London. When you pull the tail in Edinburgh, the dog will bark in London.

#### 4.5 Specific Illustrations

General illustrations may back up a statement, but specific instances are more likely to get the audience nodding in agreement. A statement like “My alma mater, Madras Christian College has produced outstanding alumni in many areas like politics or science” is a general illustration. However, if the speaker goes on to add, “Dr. Radhakrishnan, the former President of India was our alumni and so was Dr. Raja Ramanna, the atomic scientist”, it becomes more specific and perhaps more convincing.

Testimonies and quotations are often used to support a statement. The practice has probably lost credibility because of the frequent use of testimonies and endorsements in advertising. It is obviously done for

monetary returns and the question is often raised as to whether the endorser (often a sports or movie personality) is really basing it on personal experience. Testimonies and quotations have use, but need to be used cautiously after considering whether it adds to the strength of the message.

#### 4.6 Motivating for Action

Quite often the purpose of a communication is to motivate and/or initiate action. The other purposes of informing or impressing are often only preliminaries to a call for action. However, to be effective as a call for action, the communicator should be able to link the proposed action with a basic desire on the part of the listener. One does not go out and buy a TV set, because Sachin Tendulkar says it is the best TV, or because 58 % of the people in your income group have similar 48” TV sets. Something more is needed to motivate.

Human motivations have been the subject of many studies and security needs. A successful leader can communicate the incentive to act based on the level of need to correctly motivate his followers. It is not manipulative as it may sound. He is only appealing to the appropriate level of motivation.

#### 5.0 BRIEF GUIDELINES FOR THE COMMUNICATOR

Communication is a two way process. It involves the sender or active

communicator and the receiver or the passive partner in the process.

Before we look at the communication process from the receiver’s side, it may be useful to sum up the guidelines to improve the communicator’s role as a sender.

- **Be clear on what you want to say and why (your purpose).**
- **Modify your language, idioms and illustrations to suit the audience.**
- **Get his (their) attention with an impact.**
- **Ensure the listener(s) is with you and following you.**
- **Reiterate to emphasize.**
- **If your purpose is action on the part of the listener, be clear, specific.**

#### 6.0 COMMUNICATION AND THE RECEIVER

Communication is a two way street. When you ask yourself, how can I be a better communicator, ask also of how you can be a better listener. Listening and responding is an essential part of productive communication.

##### 6.1 Your Attitude.

If you are seeing the communicator with an attitude of “What good can come out of Nazareth?” you have closed your mind. You are turning a deaf ear. You may not like the person. You may think him as not being particularly bright, and may be boring from previous experiences. So you are saying to yourself, “What can he say, that has any meaning or purpose?” Try to keep an open mind, or better still find an area of interest. Maybe he is saying something that will be of use to you later. Maybe he has information that you did not have.

##### 6.2 Look for the Content.

It is often easy to be put off by the personal factors or the delivery. A CEO was unhappy about the fact that when he talks to his associates, one on one, they seem to be distracted, restless

and trying to get away. He could not understand why. A speaker talking to a group finds his listeners distracted by his pose, mannerisms or plain poor way of speaking. However, as a listener, it is in your interest not to be distracted.

### 6.3 Wait for Finish

A listener may not be very sympathetic or in tune with a speaker (either one to one or from a group). In such cases the listener starts applying his mind on his defense or attack almost as soon as the speaker starts. He runs a parallel mental guerilla war against the speaker. A good listener is a patient listener who waits till the end to hear the speaker out. He may then decide to defend or attack, but after paying full attention in the interim.

### 6.4 Get the Central Theme

Listeners sometimes tend to memorize facts or make notes, including the good

anecdotes mentioned by the speaker. In this process it is easy to miss the main point that the speaker is trying to make. At the end one hears comments like "A good speech, but what was he really trying to say". Focus on the central idea is crucial for a good listener.

### 6.5 Active Listening

Most of us assume that listening is after all a passive activity. In practice, good listening is hard work, requiring concentration and effort. The mind has to be trained to be open and receptive in spite of dull delivery and distracting circumstances. There is a tendency, unless the listener is alert, for the mind to just reject or pass over (ignore) difficult propositions or ideas.

### 7.0 TRAIN TO GRASP; IT IS NOT TOO FAST.

The human mind has a potential of being able to listen to five hundred words per minute. No speaker can

go faster than 125 to 130 per minute. Consequently complaints that the speaker was too fast, is indicative of a listener who is mentally out of shape! Of course, speakers can and should learn to slow down and enunciate properly.

But a good listener can easily follow even a fast talker and evaluate his messages as he goes along, provided the listener has cultivated the art of listening actively.

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*Taken from MA Christian Management course material.*

CM

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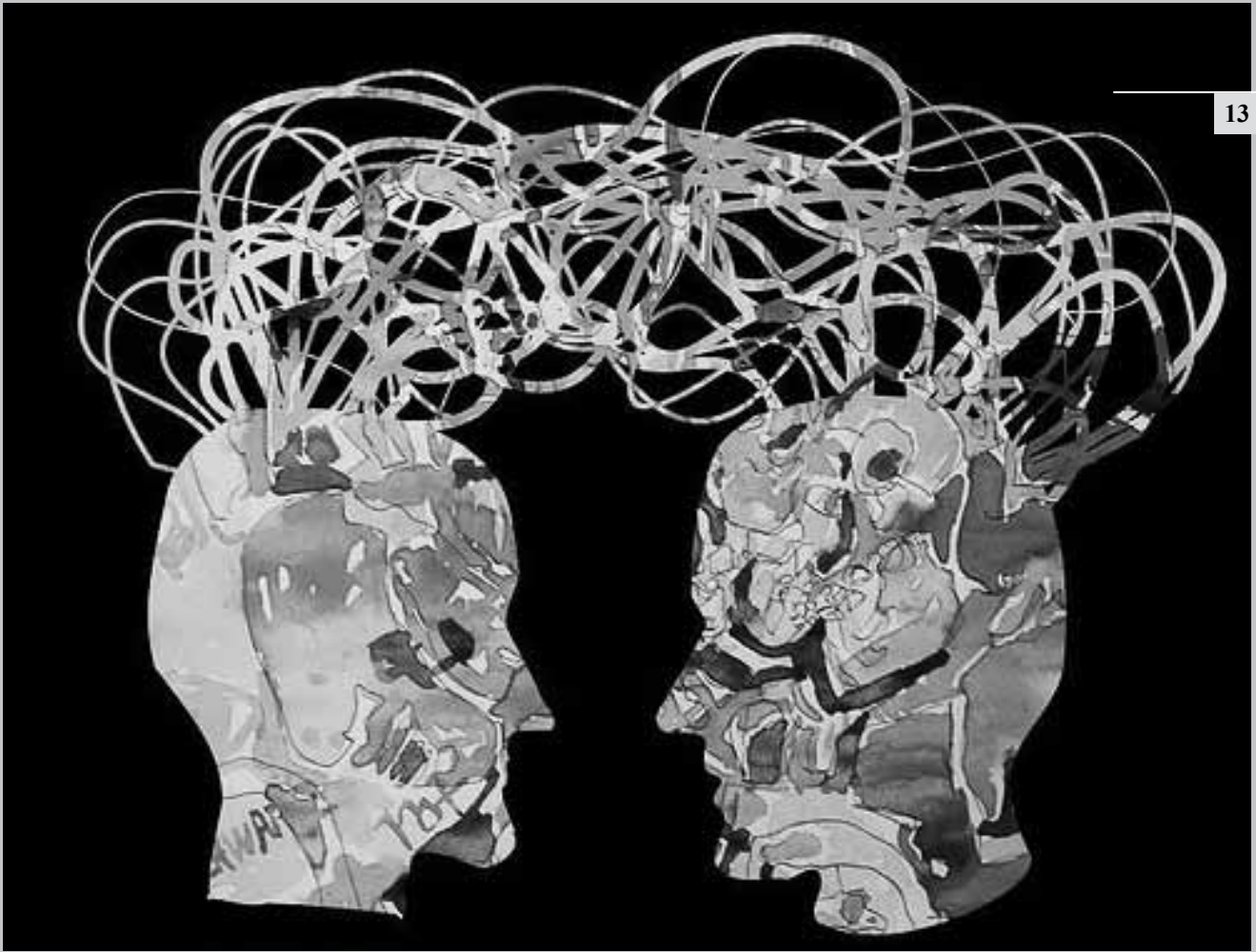
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## COMMUNICATION FOR TRANSFORMATION - AN OVERVIEW

**Prof. Jeyakar Chellaraj**

**C**ommunication is an activity in which all human beings are involved; knowingly or unknowingly; intentionally or unintentionally. The subject of communication interests and excites all of us because it deals with an everyday activity, which is very much, a part of our lives. Every day we actively communicate through our speech, our conversations and our writing. Sometimes we choose to communicate through the passive mode of silence that could be louder and more powerful than the active mode. Listening is another essential act in communication. Simple acts like

touching, patting on the back, smiling, frowning and nodding of head also constitute communication.

Communication could either be formal or informal. All professions involve communication of some form or the other. Teachers, pastors, speakers, writers, broadcasters, and advertisers use communication as their professional tool. Their professional success or failure depends on their mastery or otherwise of communication. Informally, we use communication to exchange ideas, to transfer information, to share opinions and for countless

other purpose. Communication is an essential activity in all relationships. Proper understanding, appreciation and application of techniques in inter-personal communication enrich relationships and make life enjoyable.

Effectiveness in most walks of life requires an effective expression of oneself – one's feelings, one's thoughts and one's ideas. Often we come across a large number of people who are reservoirs of rich wisdom – wisdom that could transform people, institutions and communities. Tragically, many of these people have such poor communication skills

that they end up as stagnant pools of wisdom benefiting no one.

Communication is a double edged weapon – it could be used for beneficial purpose or destructive purpose. On the positive side, communication can be life-impacting and life-transforming. It can be used to inform and educate people. It is a powerful tool for inspiring, challenging and motivating people. Alternately, it can be used to hurt people or heal the hurt caused already. Communication can either encourage or discourage people. It could strengthen or ruin relationships. Communication is power. Communication is a tool. Communication is a skill worth acquiring and an art worth mastering.

### Theories and Skills in Communication.

Communication is an art. To be perfected it needs to be practiced. The nuances of this art must be rehearsed with painstaking effort to achieve mastery. Communication is also a science. Its theories and concepts explain the way communication works in people and causes an understanding in them. These theories help the communicator choose effective tools in facilitating understanding in the listener. Most people make the mistake of limiting themselves to the study of theories of communication without practicing the skills contained in them. This is as futile as learning the theories of swimming without ever getting into water.

Then, there are others who practice skills of communication without knowing the theories behind them. Such people are like the quacks that practice medicine without formal study and training. Their effectiveness is suspect. Learning the relevant theories and practicing the essential skills can help a person achieve effectiveness in communication.

### Stages in Developing Skills

There are four essential stages in the process of developing of communication skills. An understanding of these stages will help one to consciously develop these skills. If you are reading this with the intention of developing your effectiveness in communication, you need to understand these four stage and take yourself through to the highest level of competence.

#### Stage – I unconscious incompetence

This is essentially the state of a child. A child has no skills worth mentioning. A child cannot walk or talk, neither can a child write nor do arithmetic. It cannot use a computer nor drive a bike. If we adapt the adult standards, we could say that a child is incompetent. But, a child does not know that it is incompetent. It is completely unconscious of its incompetence. So, we call this state ‘the state of unconscious incompetence’. As the child grows, it will keep growing out of this state.

All of us have to pass through this state many times in our lives. Even now we are in this state with respect to certain skills. When we are in this state, we are ignorant of our incompetence in some skills. Unless we become conscious of our incompetence we cannot grow out of this state.

A speaker, whose speeches are awful, dull, useless and boring, is in this state if he is ignorant of this fact. It will be unfortunate for him and for his listeners if he continues to be in the state, especially if he is a teacher or a pastor. For several years in my life, I had been speaking too fast for the comfort of my listeners, and with an accent that was neither helpful nor acceptable. As long as I was unaware of this problem I was in this state of ‘Unconscious Incompetence’. When

I started lecturing in the international seminars of the Haggai Institute these drawbacks were pointed out to me lovingly, by both the participants and the experts in the Institute. I am grateful to them because once I became conscious of my incompetence in these areas I started working towards improving my speech delivery.

For many years I had been spelling the word ‘beautiful’ as beutiful’. I had not been conscious of the mistake I was making. One day Prof. Swamiraj, the principal of my college and a professor of English told me ‘Jeyakar, I have seen you spell the word ‘beautiful’ as ‘beutiful’ a few times. Earlier, I thought that it was a slip. Now I realize that you are ignorant of the right spelling”. I am grateful to Prof. Swamiraj because he helped me to become conscious of my ‘incompetence’ and correct myself. Now the spell check in my computer does that job for me and saves you from becoming victims of my atrocious spelling.

If we have to constantly grow and become better persons, we must realize that we are in this state at every point in our life with respect to some skill or the other. We need the humility to remain open, to seek and receive feedback from others, so that our incompetence in the unconscious zone of our life comes into the conscious zone to receive our attention and correction.

#### Stage – II : Conscious Incompetence

In this state, a person becomes aware of his incompetence in various areas of life. Children watch the adults doing things they are not able to do. They watch people cycling and realize that they cannot do that. They watch people writing and reading, and become conscious of their incompetence in these areas. Reaching this stage is necessary to desire acquiring the

competency they need in their life.

Even adults must continuously go through this stage to become sensitive to areas in which they need improvement. Anyone who desires to excel in the art of communication must observe the wizards in the art of speaking, so that they become conscious of their incompetence in the finer aspects of communication. Seeking feedback from others is beneficial to mature out of this stage.

During my teaching days I used the blackboard a lot and loved developing ideas on it. One day when I finished teaching in one of my seminars, an educationist who was seated in the back row called me to where she was seated and asked me to read what I had written on the board. I could not read much because my writing was very feeble. She told me that I wrote on the board in the same way I wrote on the paper, moving my wrist and fingers. That made my writing too feeble for people at the back to read. She taught me that the best way to write clearly on the board is to move the hand and not the wrist. At that point, my incompetence that was in the unconscious area for several years came into the conscious area and got corrected.

### **Stage – III : Conscious Competence**

This is a state in which our incompetence in some areas of life are overcome and consciously converted to competence by enthusiastic, systematic and sustained effort. We call this state a state of ‘conscious competence’ because we take a conscious effort to develop this competence.

When we learn cycling or driving we are in this state. We consciously develop competency in these skills. We are in this state when we train ourselves to be fluent in a language

through systematic training. The process of acquiring computer literacy by undergoing a regular course of study is yet another example for this state.

As a generalization, we can say that all who study in schools or colleges, and all, who undergo training programs, are in this state, irrespective of their age. If you are reading this book with the intention of improving your skills in communication, you are now in this state.

When a person is in this state, it indicates that he is a growth oriented person. It is often said that ‘learning is a life-long process’ another way of stating this could be ‘dynamic living is continuously being in the state of conscious competence.’

Some people dislike the rigors of this state, and avoid it and as a result stop growing. Anything that does not grow is dead. Avoiding this state is denying life itself.

### **Stage IV : Unconscious Competence**

This state represents the state of excellence in a skill. When we learn typing we consciously strike the keys and painstakingly type the words. But, as we use the skill over a period of time, we reach the stage of unconscious competence. We no longer have to consciously locate the keys and strike them. The finger automatically goes to the key to be pressed. When we do this at reasonable speed and accuracy, we have achieved excellence in the art of typing. Our experience in learning to drive a car is another example of moving from conscious competence to unconscious competence.

While stage-3 is the stage of practicing a skill. Stage-4 indicates mastery of the skill. People who live responsible and victorious lives move from stage-1

to stage-4 several times during their lifetime mastering diverse and new skills.

Reading this your aim should be to reach the stage of unconscious competence in communication.

### **Effectiveness in Communication:**

Having explained some aspects of the term effectiveness, it is time to ask and answer the question, ‘what is effectiveness in communication?’

The following are some of the answers one is likely to get for this question:

- i. It is speaking fluently in flawless language with idioms, metaphors and the like.
- ii. It is holding the attention of the listeners from the beginning till the end.
- iii. It is presenting excellent content with all the latest information, in a well organized and systematic way
- iv. It is a well documented and adequately illustrated talk.
- v. It is a talk peppered with humor and spiced with anecdotes.
- vi. It is a speech so well delivered that everyone could understand.

Do the above components constitute effective communication? Yes! Most certainly! Communication involving the above components will surely make communication impressive, understandable and enjoyable. Communication with these components will be well appreciated and well received by people. These components definitely have a place in effective communication.

But, these components by themselves do not make communication effective. These statements are rather one sided. They overemphasize the role of the communicator and his skills and tend

to ignore the aspect of the impact of communication on the listeners. Effectiveness in communication is measured not only in terms of what the communicator does but also in terms of its impact on the listeners.

In the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John we have an excellent example of effective communication. Our Lord Jesus Christ encounters the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (vv6,7). The woman, very strangely, chooses to come to the well alone, at a time when there is no likelihood of anyone else being at the well. She probably did not want to face others and suffer ridicule and humiliation. Her earlier experiences could have prompted her to take this decision to avoid people. She was a loner by choice.

Jesus had a brief session of communication with her (vv 8-26). But, what a masterpiece of effective communication it was! Look at the result of this communication. The lady, who chose to be a loner, left the pot in the well, ran into the town, met people and brought them to the Lord (vv 28-30). Many Samaritans believed in the Lord Jesus Christ because of this woman's testimony (v.39).

The loner became a seeker of people. The sinner became an effective evangelist. The communication of our Lord had such a forceful impact that it totally transformed the woman. And this is what effective communication aims at and achieves. It impacts and transforms people.

Effective communication is, therefore a life impacting and life transforming communication. It requires the help and power of the Holy Spirit because human effort at the best could only make the communication informative, educative, interesting and enjoyable but not life transforming. Effective communication is blending human

effort with divine power.

Effective communication flows out of the intimacy that a person had with God. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit teaches us all things (John 14:26). As we begin the process of learning to achieve effectiveness in communication, let us learn from the Holy Spirit.

We can pick up a few more characteristics of effective communication from the Master himself.

- Effective communication is communication with 'authority' (Luke 4:32)
- It is an amazing communication with 'graceful words (Luke4:22)

I suggest that you spend few moments asking yourself the question. "why do I want to be an effective communicator?"

- It sets the hearts of the listeners 'burn within' them (Luke24:32)
- It helps many to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 14:1)

Johns Stott in his book 'The Contemporary Christian' says that effectiveness in communication involves "Listening to the ancient word and the modern world and relating one to another with a combination of fidelity and sensitivity." He says "we are called to the difficult and even painful task of 'double listening' so that we will avoid the pitfalls of unfaithfulness and irrelevance, and be able to speak God's Word to God's world with effectiveness."

It is willingly becoming instruments in God's hand and communicating what he wants us to communicate, in the way the wants to communicate.

I suggest that you spend few moments asking yourself the question. "why do I want to be an effective communicator?" write the answer to this question in your journal. This answer will make you learner with a purpose and not just a mere reader of this book. You may change your answer to this question in the days that follow as you get fresh insights, but be sure that you know why you want to master skills in communication.

#### Recall Points:

1. Communication is essentially a skill, which is measured by sustained practice with a clear understanding of the theories that govern it.
2. Growth is moving from the stage of unconscious incompetence to the stage of unconscious competence.
3. Effective communication is a life transforming and life impacting communication that flows from our intimacy with God.

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3. John Stott, The Contemporary Christian, Evangelical Literature Service and UESI publication trust, India 2001 p29

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# What Makes a Business Christian?

## R. Paul Stevens

Running a Christian business is like having a Christian marriage. A marriage is not Christian simply because two Christians get married. They may conduct their marriage in a non-Christian way, without making a covenant marked by leaving father and mother, cleaving in friendship and becoming one flesh (Gen 2:24). Non-Christians may have (unknown to them of course) a Christian marriage if they make such a covenant. In the same way the presence of a Christian in a business or running a business does not guarantee the business is Christian. The Christians may be keeping their faith and daily work in separate compartments on the assumption that “religion and business do not mix.” This is especially evident where Christians view business as merely a way of making money where there real interest (and ministry) is in church-work.

The following are ten marks that provide a comprehensive vision for the Christian in business:

### **1. THE PRESENCE OF A CHRISTIAN OR CHRISTIANS WITH A SPHERE OF INFLUENCE:**

The owner/manager of a small or large business has a special opportunity to “incarnate” his or her value system into every aspect of the business. But even “low level” employees have a sphere of influence. It may be useful for clerks, for instance, to draw an imaginary circle of 30’ radius around their work station and prayerfully to regard this as their “parish,” bathing all the people, structures, equipment and interactions within that circle with continuing prayer.

### **2. A PRODUCT OR SERVICE IN HARMONY WITH GOD’S CREATIONAL PURPOSE:**

There is almost no place in the work-

world so demonized that a Christian might not be called to serve there. Obviously businesses that thrive on prostitution, drug traffic and the exploitation of the poor are not acceptable options. But Adam and Eve were called to be priests of creation, to “work it and take care of it” as trustees and stewards (Gen 2:15). Further, the command to “fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28) and “rule over it” (1:26) involves developing and enculturating the world (Gen 4:19-22). The world was not made for Adam and Eve (to use as they wish); they were made for the world. This means that Adam and Eve (and all of us who are restored to our human vocation through new life in Christ) had three full-time jobs: communion with God, community-building, and co-creativity with God. So products or services which are in harmony with God’s creational purposes include the following: agriculture, forest management,

providing communication services, accounting and financial services, products that make people more beautiful, entertainment and play products and services, processing foodstuffs, governing, politics and government services, town planning, counseling, medical services, education, media, transportation, accounting and stock brokering, selling life insurance, repairing automobiles, composing or performing music, creating beautiful things, crafting environments, making tools and law enforcement. The Christian manager knows that structures can have either a positive or negative influence and ministers wisely both to people and to structures.

**3. A MISSION OR BUSINESS PURPOSE THAT IS LARGER AND DEEPER THAN MERE FINANCIAL PROFIT (THOUGH INCLUDING IT) SO THAT THE BUSINESS CONTRIBUTES IN SOME WAY TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

A Christian business person should wisely define what is the mission and hold this before all the employees. The mission is why the business is there; the vision is what we want to be; the values are how we want to live as we pursue our vision. In distinction from a non-profit society, a for-profit business must make money. Profit in a business is like blood in the body. Every organization needs it to survive and function. But no one gets up in the morning and says, "I live for my blood." But if our blood goes away we stop living.

Organizations that state they exist for the purpose of making money are doomed to failure. Organizations exist to serve customers, and they do so when they provide the customers with value. The value added to the customer is such that normally the customer will pay a profit. Therefore profit is a legitimate measure of the value the firm is producing for its customers. Without a surplus the firm will not be

able to continue to offer the service or to add value. It is legitimate for a Christian to pray for a profit. But that is not the same as having the company exist "to make money." (Flow) Being a Kingdom business also involves respect for the environment (soil, trees, air, human community) and some share of stewardship of creation rather than raping the earth.

**4. THE PRODUCT & SERVICE IS OFFERED WITH SUCH EXCELLENCE THAT IT SUGGESTS THE PRESENCE OF THE KINGDOM AND INVITES THE OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS:**

A Christian in business strives for an excellence of service or product that makes the customer surprised, rather than left demanding more, or resigned to the minimum the business can offer. Jesus invited his disciples to reflect on how much more they were doing than the Gentiles, the tax collectors and the pagans (Matt 5:43-48). A service company that provides extraordinary service or a product that has extraordinary quality invites the question "Why?" It should not only be the fact that someone is a Christian that invites the opportunity to witness to Christ, but the evidence of something special in the way business is done that is a sign of the Kingdom. Unpaid bills, excessive profit, slow delivery, no guarantees, poor quality, dishonest advertising, and sloppy workmanship all speak negatively no matter how positive the Christian worker is about being saved.

**5. CUSTOMERS ARE TREATED WITH DIGNITY & RESPECT & NOT JUST AS A MEANS OF PROFIT:**

"The customer is always right" is the secular version of this. But this is not always true. More than assuming that the customer is always right the Christian business treats every customer as a person to be loved and appreciated whether or not business is transacted. Even difficult customers need love even when they

are wrong. Loving customers as oneself is neighbour love (Matt 22:39). A salesman will sell only when three conditions are met: the customer wants it, needs it and can afford it. Love for competitors is even harder. The Old Testament offers a powerful model of harvesting with the poor in view (Deut 24:19-22), which means leaving something for someone else. In contrast business people that engage in hyper-competition (or predatory competition) find their identity in domination. They are driven by the will to power and the survival of the fittest. Because winning is the only thing there is no space for failure or compassion. They lead relationally deficient lives, measuring others only to see "how they stack up" and if they are judged to be deficient to defeat them.

**6. EMPLOYEES AND WORKERS ARE EQUIPPED TO ACHIEVE GREATER POTENTIAL IN THEIR LIFE AND, IF THEY ARE CHRISTIANS, TO WORK WHOLEHEARTEDLY (Col 3:22-25) WITH FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE (1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:2-3):**

One of the most tragic situations today is that many Christians are noted for being "poor workers" because their real interest is in evangelism and church activities. In a Christian business people work hard and wholeheartedly (Eph 6:7) because (1) work is good for us and the world--given as it was before the Fall (Gen 1:26-31; 2:15); (2) though work has been twisted and spoiled through sin (Gen 3:16) it can be substantially redeemed through Christ; (3) indeed, as Luther taught, there is a "cross" in the marketplace providing a practical arena for our sanctification in the challenges to ourselves that we encounter in the context of our work (Col 3:25; 2 Thess 3:6-13); (4) work is part of our calling (Eph 4:1) to live for God's glory (Eph 1:12, 14) and to share in Christ's purposeful rule of all creation (Eph 1:22; 2:10), a calling that can be

expressed anywhere (1 Cor 7:17,20); (5) what makes work Christian is not the religious character of the work or even the fact that it is obviously a “people-helping” profession, but faith, hope and love; (6) work is a way of practical love since by it we provide for ourselves and those we love, and may have a surplus to give to the needy (Eph 4:28; 1 Thess 4:12); and (7) Jesus is our boss (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:23). A Christian employer sees every interaction with an employee as an equipping opportunity through which the employee can be trained, encouraged, improved and released for his or her potential. In line with this many Christian business invest a substantial part of the profits into employee development and training. (See chapter 5 of *The Equippers Guide to Every-Member Ministry*, IVP, 1992).

**7. ALL ASPECTS OF THE BUSINESS ARE CONSIDERED TO BE POTENTIALLY A MINISTRY AND THE SUBJECT OF PRAYER:** The Christian businessperson does not create a secular-sacred division in

business (witnessing is sacred--doing the accounts is secular; direct people involvement is sacred--maintaining equipment is secular). All is part of our creation mandate (Gen 1:26-28) and done for Jesus (Col 3:23), be done to God’s glory, and is worthy of prayer. William Tyndale, the English Reformer, said, “There is no work better than another to please God; to pour water, to wash dishes, to be a souter [cobbler], or an apostle, all is one, to wash dishes and to preach is all one, as touching the deed, to please God.” The process of work has eternal significance (1 Cor 3:14-15) and may contribute in some way to the New Jerusalem. (See chapters 1-3 in *Disciplines of the Hungry Heart*, SHAW, 1993)

**8. THE CULTURE (VALUES, SYMBOLS, GOVERNING BELIEFS) OF THE ORGANIZATION LINE UP WITH GOD’S WORD AND KINGDOM PURPOSES:** It is now well known that the environment or culture of a business “speaks” more loudly than the stated business policy. People “get a message” as soon as they

walk into a store or a factory. Culture has outwardly symbols and cues (signs saying that we guarantee good service), values that are cherished even if they are not published, these two being based on underlying beliefs. Both workers and customers are influenced profoundly by this invisible culture. Wise managers know that the cultivation of the culture is part of their leadership: what values are cherished, how people are treated, how people learn in the organization, how failure and mistakes are handled, whether the truth should always be told. Biblical beliefs that should inform the culture are: (1) men and women have equal dignity; (2) work is good; (3) people are sinners but can be redeemed. Biblical values that should be cherished are: (1) communication (in advertising or sales) must be honest even if the sale is lost; (2) the customer is a person to be treated with respect; (3) we are not a business that can be “bought” by bribes or kick-backs; (4) prices are fair and not inflated to make an excessive profit; (5) workers are given a second chance--there is forgiveness as well as

***“There is no work better than another to please God; to pour water, to wash dishes, to be a souter [cobbler], or an apostle, all is one, to wash dishes and to preach is all one, as touching the deed, to please God.”***



discipline. The Christian manager is a community-builder in the business, a “pastor” in a secular context.

**9. THE LEADERS ARE SERVANTS, DEDICATED TO SERVE THE MISSION OF THE BUSINESS, THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE EMPLOYEES, THE CUSTOMERS AND SHAREHOLDERS BECAUSE THEY ARE FIRST OF ALL SERVANTS OF GOD:**

“Servant leadership” is so commonly used that it is forgotten how these two words cannot normally be brought together. (1) Servant leadership is based on the statement of Jesus in Matthew 20:25-28, and gathers up the great statements in Isaiah about the Servant (the people, the remnant and the Messiah) such that the key word used in the New Testament for ministry is “servant/service”. (2) Being a servant leader does not mean being passive and merely responding to pressures/circumstances. There is room for godly ambition, for dreams and visions. Ungodly ambition is where we define ourselves by what new achievement we have accomplished, by what we do rather than who we are. Because no achievement can provide personal meaning, the driven person either lives a frenzied life or collapses in despair.

But, in contrast, God in creation expressed a dimension of ambition when he created the opportunity for the development of his creation. In the mind of God the City of God always stood as the final destiny of man. So in the workplace there can be legitimate expression of God-honouring ambition as we fulfill the creation mandate for God’s glory. (3) Servant managers/leaders are concerned to bring the best out of their employees, to equip them, even more than they are concerned with their own advancement. The leader’s effectiveness is measured by the advancement of his employees. (4) Servant leaders serve the business by [i] continuously holding up the mission purpose of the company; [ii] empowering employees to do their job well; [iii] saying thanks to everyone, showing them they are appreciated.

**10. THE BUSINESS RUNS ON GRACE:**

Business takes the Christian into the “principalities and powers”—economic, social, political structures of society, into patterns of competition and dishonest financial transactions. These structures, originally created good by Christ (Col 1:16) have become broken and polluted by human sin

and “colonized” by Satan (Eph 6:10-18). Christian business persons find themselves frequently in situations where there is no easy answer, no “black and white” choice to be made.

Recognizing that Christ is now King but that the Kingdom has not yet fully come, Christians make difficult decisions (1) on the basis of clear teachings of Scripture; (2) in fellowship with other believers in business; (3) prayerfully. Inevitably mistakes and compromises will be made and sins committed. These must not be excused; but neither must they destroy the believer. There is forgiveness; there is hope. Luther once said, “sin boldly” (because you will be a sinner in business); “but believe in Christ more boldly still.”

*Prof. R. Paul Stevens is a theologian of global repute and prolific writer who has written several books on marketplace ministries. Liberating the Laity, the Complete Book of Everyday Christianity, Doing God’s Business are few of his popular works. Reprinted with the author’s permission.*

CM

## India’s demographic dividend raring to grow

The average Indian is expected to be only 29 years old in 2020, as against 37 in China and the United States, 45 in western Europe and 48 in Japan. The dreams are taking concrete shape; it’s what the world calls a demographic dividend. 459 million is the number of Indians between 13 and 35; 333 million is the number of literate young Indians; 62 per cent of the literate youth live in villages; 77 per cent of literate youth are interested in films and music, 72 per cent in news and current affairs, 59 per cent in religious and spiritual topics, 35 per cent in science and technology, and 34 per cent in environmental pollution; 98 minutes is the time spent by youth on TV every day, 44 minutes on

magazines, 32 minutes on newspapers and 70 minutes surfing the Internet. In India, it translates into a growing number of literate youngsters, which is both a challenge and an opportunity. India has 459 million youngsters who were born after 1975. The interests of India’s emerging leaders throw up a surprise. While 35 per cent care about science and technology, 34 per cent are concerned about environmental pollution. More expectedly, 77 per cent are interested in music and films, 72 per cent in news and current affairs, and 59 per cent in religion.

# How to conduct a Church Committee Meeting Effectively?

Rev. B. J. Premiah

**1. DEFINITION:** A meeting of the committee can be defined as elected or selected people getting together with the idea to discuss about a subject or a few subjects to share their knowledge, experience and views and arrive at a decision.

**2. OBJECTIVES:** Any committee meeting should have specific objectives, clearly defined reasons for its conduct. Normally the objectives are (i) to inform (ii) to discuss and exchange views (iii) to inspire and motivate the members to become active participants (iv) to analyse and solve problems (v) to obtain opinion or feedback (vi) to evaluate past performance (vii) to counsel or reconcile conflict (viii) to plan for growth development of the church and (ix) to lead to a definite decision, follow-up action and initiate the process of transformation.

**3. PLANNING FOR A COMMITTEE MEETING:** A thorough knowledge of the constitution of the Church (in other cases the laid down belief, structure and practice of the local church) is necessary to plan for the Committee meeting. The constitution of any church must be based on Biblical principles and as a guide to the spiritual welfare of the church. The bible provides the basis and the church constitution provides the guidelines. Used properly, a constitution can be a great help in the smooth running of the affairs of a church since it contains descriptions



of the role of committee members and duties of office-bearers, directions about frequency of meetings, notice and quorum required, length of service of committee members and office-bearers, etc. So the constitution provides the framework within which the committee should function.

Any meeting has to be planned properly taking into consideration the number of persons in the committee, the date and time, the place, the purpose of the meeting (agenda), the handout materials required, etc.

The selection of date, time and place are very important for any meeting. The place for the meeting must be selected beforehand where physical arrangements have to be made about the meeting. The seating arrangements must be made in such a way that would be conducive for more participation by the members of the committee.

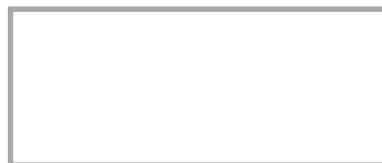


Fig.1

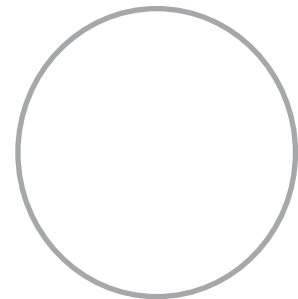


Fig.2

It is better to choose the circle type in Fig.2 rather than in Fig.1.

1. The date and time fixed for the committee meeting must be convenient to all or most of the members.
2. Timing is the key to a successful meeting. As we have a starting time for the meeting, if possible it is better to have a finishing time.
3. The agenda prepared well in advance and circulated to the members must contain items to be discussed. It is to tell the members what subjects would be dealt with in a pre-determined sequence. It gives the member an opportunity to apply their mind beforehand, analyze matters and

come with fruitful suggestions. Thus the member's contribution at the meeting makes the meeting more effective. The agenda is a framework, or a structure which facilitates members' active participation, effective contribution done in an orderly manner. While preparing the chairman and the secretary must not give a vague agenda but specific agenda explaining each item clearly and if necessary attach relevant papers. If necessary, labels such as 'For information' or 'For Discussion' or 'For Decision' can be attached to each item of the agenda. If possible a rough indication of the timing of each subject in the agenda may be a useful guide but need not be strictly adhered to as the Chairman has to be flexible. The items in the agenda have to be in logical and chronological sequences.

4. It is also suggested to have an office – bearers meeting before the committee meeting so that the office – bearers can go to the meeting fully equipped with facts and figures and be prepared to offer clarification if necessary and guide the members properly so that decisions can be arrived at quickly without wasting time

5. The meeting must be started on time. Starting late wastes precious time and can be resented by those who are punctually present. People will gradually lose interest.

#### **4. THE CONDUCT OF THE MEETING:**

In order to have better results, the meeting has to be conducted properly. So the opening of the meeting with a word of prayer, self-introduction of members if necessary and supply of snacks and coffee can all help to reduce the tension and induce a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. The chairman has to enlighten the members about

**Without follow-up the committee meeting conducted would be a mockery. Decisions made at a committee meeting without implementation would be like body without soul.**

the scope of the concerned committee and the functions prescribed in the constitution. The chairman has to give the impression to the members present that the meeting convened is important and careful planning has been done for the meeting and the chairman is fully competent to run the meeting and that the presence of each member is important and essential. Only then the chairman can win the confidence of the committee members so that from the beginning the meeting could be a smooth sailing journey and not a 'lightning and thunder' session.

If you want to start the discussion on a particular subject, start with a positive note and 'get the ball rolling'. Developing discussion is to stimulate the members to think and talk relevantly, to take part in the meeting actively and to contribute meaningfully. At the end of discussion on each item, the chairman has to summarize the viewpoints. It will show the members that he was very attentive and grasped what the speakers have said and lead them to a clear decision. If necessary, a sub-committee consisting of experts in a particular field can be constituted to study a particular matter within a prescribed period and place their recommendations before the standing

committee for final decision.

To conclude the committee meeting the chairman before concluding prayer can present in a nutshell how the decisions made for each item is consistent with the vision of the church and would contribute to the mission of the church. The meeting must be ended on a positive note in a pleasant atmosphere. Do find something good to say about the whole deliberation.

While writing the minutes, the secretary who has to record must carefully word the minutes. The minutes need not contain whole proceedings but only the decisions made must be specifically written with clearly worded sentences. The minutes must be circulated to the members within one week or 10 days, so that the members can point out in writing whether the minutes give a true picture of the decisions taken at the meetings.

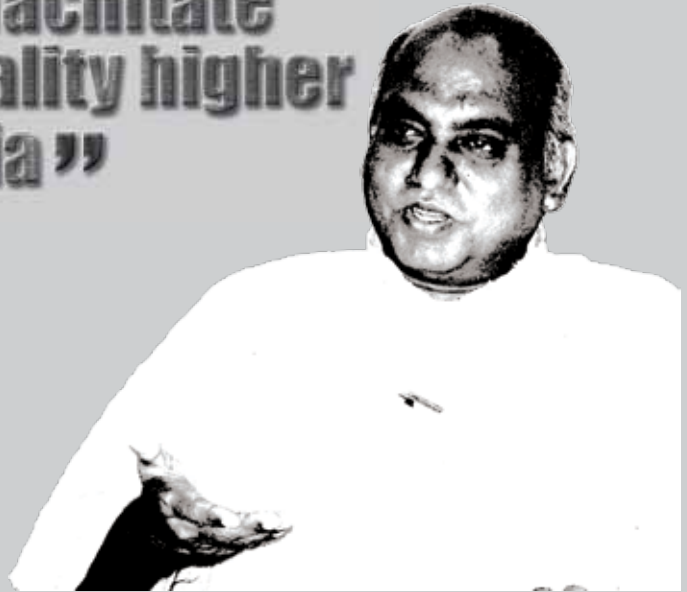
**5. FOLLOW-UP:** Without follow-up the committee meeting conducted would be a mockery. Decisions made at a committee meeting without implementation would be like body without soul. If decisions, do not lead to action then the following criticism would become true. "A Committee is a group of people who can do nothing, but together decide that nothing can be done" and "A Committee is a group of the unwilling picked from the unfit, to do the unnecessary".

The committee members of a church have a greater responsibility, and are more answerable than Church members. Let us keep in mind the warning of our Lord that "To whom much is given of him is much required".

*Rev. B.J. Premiah is former diocesan secretary of CSI Madras Diocese and has served as presbyter of Holy Redeemer's Church. He also leads the Chennai chapter of TAFTEE.*

# “Reforms should facilitate the growth of quality higher education in India”

*Fr. Xavier Alphonse, S.J., served as Principal of Loyola college during 92-95 and is currently the Director for ICRDCE which has pioneered the formation of Community Colleges initiating the implementation of an alternative system of education for the poor and down-trodden from 1995. Since then he has been involved in the preparation, establishment, monitoring and evaluation of 293 Community Colleges in 20 States of India. Fr. Xavier talks about his role in the UGC and his vision for higher education in India.*



## INTERVIEW WITH FR. XAVIER ALPHONSE, S. J.

### **How did your induction into the UGC take place?**

My role in the community college movement in India was one of the main reasons for my induction in the UGC as a member. My name was noted by the HRD ministry particularly by the then minister, Mr. Arjun Singh who wanted me to include community college movement in the mainstream of higher education in India. Second, for a long time the UGC had representatives from universities and other institutes of national importance, they wanted people representatives from the grassroot level to be members in the Commission. A college principal from Bhopal and myself were chosen for this purpose. Both of us were from the college sector directly inducted in the UGC to voice the concerns of the colleges from this sector. Mr. Arjun Singh felt that if higher education is to be delivered at the grassroot level, this could be achieved in the colleges.

If you look at funding allocation for higher education, almost 60 per cent is towards central universities. Another 20 per cent goes towards state universities and other institutes of national importance. For colleges, the funding was only 10 per cent. Deemed and private universities don't get funds. The minister felt that the funding was not proportionate and he wanted to address this issue in the XI<sup>th</sup> Plan.

### **As far as the UGC is concerned where does the community college movement stand today?**

My key role in the UGC has been the clear presentation of the community college system. Unfortunately, when the final document took shape, which was about to be sent to the HRD Ministry, since community colleges focus on school dropouts, marginalized or the excluded most of whom are below 10<sup>th</sup> standard, it was pointed out that technically UGC is

not permitted to deal with those below 12<sup>th</sup> passed. The whole issue got stuck because of this important section in the UGC Act. I have submitted a proposal which is being examined. However, as it stands it cannot come under UGC. The change of the minister also hampered this. There was no possibility of recognition, accreditation and funding.

### **What would be some of your other achievements in the UGC?**

Besides my role in the community college movement, broadly speaking my contribution in UGC is in five areas. My key role in the UGC has been championing the cause of the colleges in India. First is the strengthening of autonomous colleges in the country. I also serve as the member of the standing commission of autonomous colleges which involves quickening and facilitating the process of autonomy for colleges. The scheme of autonomous colleges

is purely the scheme of the UGC. It has nothing to do with the Central and State Governments. Currently there are around 350 autonomous colleges in India. Many colleges in the last few years have received autonomous status though there are States which have not accepted this and have not made the amendments in their university acts. Promotion of autonomy has been one key contribution of mine and I have also published two books on this subject.

Second, we've increased the development assistance to colleges, first to the 12 B and 2 F colleges which are provisions for eligibility of grants for aided colleges. The 12 B provision is for affiliation and 2 F is for granting of funds. We've provided development

done a great job for Karnataka and Kerala. There are regional offices in Bangalore, Pune, Hyderabad, Guwahati and Bhopal. These regional offices coordinate with the States. Because of the decentralization process they've been able to select colleges.

Fourth, I have been instrumental in arguing for the cause of the teachers community. At one point of time there was a rule in the UGC, that in order to be a lecturer, besides the Master's degree one has to pass the National Eligibility Test (NET) and State Eligibility Test (SET) except in the case of Ph.D. Two years ago I made a positive intervention in the UGC where I stated that 60,000 teachers serving in universities and colleges who had done their M.Phil and Ph.D

pending in the Parliament called Unfair Practices in Educational Institutions in which the last paragraph exempts minority institutions from this act. The Act prevents the institution from receiving capitation fees, exorbitant fees, admission of students beyond the limit etc. I had been involved even in the recent case of the Madras University regarding appointment of teachers. These are some areas under minority rights that I've contributed.

My other concern is the marginalized sections of society. One of the schemes I was involved in looking into the Gross Enrollment Ratios of 349 colleges in 349 districts in India. This scheme is meant to cater to the rural poor so that they can have access to higher education in their respective

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assistance and merged schemes which would cover physically challenged people, minorities, women, coaching classes, remedial classes, all of which are for the marginalized and the poor. Under the XIth Plan I would've interviewed around 300 college principals and granted them funds on behalf of UGC. We have taken into consideration colleges that have not yet reached 12 B status.

Third, I was part of the team that framed guidelines for all the schemes of UGC. Wherever there were bottlenecks, bureaucracy and centralization, we tried to reduce this as far as possible. We gave much power to regional offices to disburse the funds. The Bangalore office in particular, has

were left out. They serve on contract basis for a small amount. Whereas those who after completing just their Masters after passing the NET and SET were on the UGC pay roll. This was an anomaly and so we relaxed the rules. Those who were M.Phils can teach under graduation and those who completed Ph.D could teach post graduation. Unfortunately, we're now back to the NET and SET tests criteria. There are now new regulations for Ph.D.

Another concern of mine is the intrusion into minority rights particularly in the appointment of teachers and principals. My concern is that Articles 29 and 30 should not be violated. Recently, there is an Act

areas. But because of the lack of collaboration between the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the State governments the scheme couldn't take off. State Governments are not interested. There is a general trend in India where there is a lull in public funding for higher education. So obviously, private players have joined the fray. If you look at the national scenario, almost 80 per cent of the colleges and even universities are private and are self financing institutions.

My main focus has always been on the college as the unit of higher education. Very often people think of UGC in terms of Central, State and Private Universities.



Fr. Xavier with the Members and Officials of UGC

### How do you see the growing commercialization of education in India?

Commercialization is inevitable and unavoidable. It is ethically bad. However, when you look at the issue closely, in terms of financial viability and feasibility, where should the institution go in the payment of salaries, provision of Infrastructure, lab and equipment facilities, information technology facilities? They will end up charging the clientele. However, the charges could've been reasonable but the fee structure is exorbitant, a huge capitation fee is taken and a good profit is made out of it. This is the unethical dimension in this issue.

I've interacted with several of these self financing players and their complaint is that the government doesn't finance or help them whether it is from the Central or the State Government. Their question is how can the staff be retained if at least 80 per cent of the UGC pay scale for lecturer is not provided. Today the UGC pay scale for lecturers in aided colleges has gone up by four fold compared to yesteryears. A lecturer who enters an aided college starts with Rs. 28,000. The associate professor

gets around 38,000. Then you have the grade of the professor and professor emeritus etc. A professor serving 25 to 30 years gets around 1.5 lakhs. How can private institutions compete with this? On one hand commercialization has become inevitable and necessary for sustainability and on the other hand it has become unethical because of the exorbitant charges levied on the student community. I am all for charging the student who can afford so that it helps the sustainability of the institution. However, the irony in such a context is that despite heavy fees levied on the student you still don't get proper adequate facilities and infrastructure which in turn makes the whole issue grossly unethical. They don't plough the money back into the institution. This is one of the complaints against deemed universities. Of course, there are notable exceptions to this. However, very often the money is siphoned off to the family who owns the institution. I think the biggest damage of this model is that it denies access to those who are poor and deserving.

### Sustainability and higher education seem like a difficult balancing act. Are there institutions which are good models?

Vellore Institute of Technology is a

good example of a deemed university which is a well managed, ethical and socially responsible private university. Mr. Viswanathan who runs VIT makes sure he selects 40 students each year from Tamil Nadu who have secured high marks but are from poorer families who cannot afford. The institution provides total free education in any branch of engineering the student chooses. This would run into crores of rupees in terms of hostel facilities, tuition fees, books and resources etc. for forty students each year. Balancing acts like these will restore credibility. Balancing sustainability and accessibility to the poor is crucial for self financing institutions. We need to develop a new model because hereafter higher education will increasingly be self financing.

I pose this challenge to our own Christian institution on how to be sustainable and at the same time remain committed to our social mission and preferential option for the poor. If we reconcile these two factors we'll be able to develop a new model and showcase it to the country. We've been trying to do this in the Loyola Arts and Science College at Vettavalam.

When we're talking about sustainability

**I've always pleaded with the UGC that we must devise a mechanism which is self-monitory. Sufficient level of freedom and autonomy should be given to institutions to assert themselves.**

there are four costs involved here. The first is the cost of building, infrastructure and equipment. The cost for the building should not come from the students. Very often self-financing colleges will start with a thatched roof and take the money from the student by way of fees, capitation and "building donations." Second the running cost of the institute is possible with reasonable salaries for the staff and appropriate fees structure and sound management practice. Third, the college has to start right from its inception, a corpus fund for scholarship. The fourth cost is sponsorship. Corporate social responsibility can help in this direction. Contact and relationship with socially conscious industries and big companies can prove very helpful.

**A lot of deemed universities have come under the government's scanner. What is your observation of deemed universities which have sprouted around the country?**

I think the idea of deemed university is a wonderful concept and effort. You have tremendous freedom in a deemed university which you will not find in an affiliated aided college or institution. The freedom for innovation, experimentation, governance, administration, evaluation models, contact with industries, public-private partnerships, placement of students is invaluable. In one campus itself, you can have as many disciplines and also interdisciplinary courses.

The academic council of the deemed university has complete freedom to frame the course curriculum. In some cases, private deemed universities are better than some central universities. Many of them have provisions to specialize in a particular field. They can experiment in different permutations and combinations of courses which make them a breeding ground of innovation and research.

On the other hand, there are several deemed universities charging high capitation fees from students but which don't even provide basic infrastructure. You also find many politicians joining the fray and starting deemed universities as business enterprises. It's abuses such as these that outweigh the credible ones and capture the spotlight and attract media attention. The media also doesn't highlight the positive role played by credible and excellent deemed universities. I have personally seen shining examples of excellent deemed universities.

**What is your observation of the recommendations made by the National Knowledge Commission and Yashpal committee on education reforms?**

We certainly need reforms primarily in the area of governance of higher education which was amply illustrated by both the Knowledge Commission and Yashpal Committee. We definitely need to change the

governance and administration of our institutions. Bureaucracy must go and the institution should have the freedom and accountability structures in place to function. When you look at the spirit of the Knowledge Commission, it went so far as to suggest upgrading 1500 or so excellent colleges to universities status to meet the growing need. This is the practice in other parts of the world. Yashpal Committee says that we need an overarching body of governance in order to streamline the bureaucracy and slackness. The 13 statutory councils don't agree on the parameters. How do you force a consensus on important parameters such as quality, excellence, relevance etc. Only a larger body can achieve this. On the whole, the spirit of the recommendations are noteworthy but the way the reforms are being dealt with in terms of implementation and action is dangerous. Reforms need to be carried in a phased and systematic manner and not by bulldozing your way through. For example, all of a sudden 44 deemed universities were derecognized. Deemed universities were suddenly categorized into 3 categories and dealt with stringently. For effective reforms to be realized the chance for compliance and improvement adequate space and time need to be given.

**But won't this again institutionalize bureaucracy and red tapism in the process of giving them the space and**

**time?**

I've always pleaded with the UGC that we must devise a mechanism which is self-monitory. Sufficient level of freedom and autonomy should be given to institutions to assert themselves. Their survival in the market is because of the quality education. Dictating terms to them as to how they should function in terms of academics, administration and finance is not healthy regulation. They need the freedom and the accountability to function properly not by unnecessary burdens of regulatory umbrellas. Regulation by arm-twisting for compliance and reforms will not help.

**The government may justify this as ensuring accountability. What would be your understanding of accountability?**

We must understand accountability in terms of our stakeholders. All educational institutions must be accountable to its stakeholders which comprises the students, the parents, the community, the staff. Is the institute in its final outcome shaping the all-round development of the student to be a citizen and be involved in nation building? This is my utmost accountability to the student community and mission of the institute. It's all about the delivery of quality education which is not just academic oriented but citizen oriented, value based, job oriented and community oriented. Reforms should facilitate the growth of the institution rather than impose bottlenecks that impede its growth. The institution should not get bogged down by dealing with bottlenecks rather than focusing on its strategic vision.

**The government has plans to open its borders to foreign universities to set up base in India. Will this help the growth of higher education in India?**

As far as I am concerned, I think it's

a risky proposition. My question is who is going to come here? My guess is it'll be third-rated universities of foreign countries which are not able to get students within their own countries. Therefore, India can be a good catchment area for them. You'll find them conducting educational fares and making big media splash. I am all for twinning programmes with a foreign university say, Loyola College twinning up with a credible and reputed foreign university for a project or having semester programmes in partnership with the foreign university. Loyola College can accept a degree programme for a foreign university. But to have a foreign university setting up its own campus here within India may not prove beneficial. This may deplete the institutions here of good students. There is already a mindset here that considers anything foreign as qualitatively better. The minister, Mr. Kapil Sibal is very hopeful that Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Oxford, Cambridge etc will enter here. We need to wait and see. Moreover the advent of their entry should be on our terms and conditions.

Foreign universities tend to see education as a profit-making commodity. If this is how they see it we too need to negotiate on business terms. The important questions are how affordable is it for the Indian students? Will it cause more exploitation?

**Will not their entry increase healthy competition and thereby raise the standards of higher education?**

This is assuming the best universities will come here. Reputed and quality universities already have a huge intake of students on their home turf. They need not come here to find more students. Students in India who can afford to study abroad can always do so. The most critical question is how will these foreign universities help in increasing the national objective

in increasing the Gross Enrollment Ratio to 30 per cent. The current admission rate is only 12 per cent now nationally. When we're talking about development of the nation, higher education is a critical sector which is directly connected to research. There is already a strong opinion of development being lopsided which is widening the divide between the haves and the have-nots. Information Technology has already created a digital divide. Now we're talking about India being a knowledge society. But are we risking widening the divide between the ones with knowledge and those with no knowledge?

The reality of India is the great divide of the rich and the poor. The recent report by Oxford Research Scholars Association points out that 400 million people in India still live on \$ 1.25 a day which is around Rs. 55. How can a person let alone the family live his daily life on that amount? Then how can a family say with three children have access to food, clothing, shelter and education.

**As an educationist involved in the national scene, what is your vision of higher education in India?**

First, we should create as many colleges and educational institutions in rural India which will increase accessibility. Second, we need to mainstream the alternative system of education of community colleges where the rural and urban poor can complete their diploma programme and through credit transfer build up horizontal mobility for livelihood and build vertical mobility so that they can enter the mainstream of higher education. Third, excellent educational institutions need to be identified so that with the assistance of the government, they are incentivized to help the poor and the marginalized sections. By this the marginalized communities are not deprived of the

fruits of higher education. Fourth, cutting edge research for country need to be emphasized and supported so that it improves the quality of life of the poor. We need scientific and empirical research on poverty reduction, job creation, creation of entrepreneurs etc. We need to constantly develop curriculum which is suitable for our needs. This is where relevance of our educational system should be looked into. To achieve all this our structures and regulatory mechanisms need to be simple, where educational institutions are given freedom to perform. The system currently is fragmented. We still have separate medical council, nursing council, technical council etc. Our thinking is still colonial. Structurally, we need an integral revolution in higher education and not cosmetic changes. These should be done by academicians and educationists who have a heart for the poor and the interest of the nation in mind.

Even the UGC should be given greater autonomy. Currently, it is excessively

controlled by the MHRD. No major decision in the UGC can be taken without the approval of the MHRD.

#### **When it comes to minority rights today what are some of your concerns?**

The perception of minority rights has changed in the country. I see a growing trend where the concept of minority rights is not seen favorably. There are several who are of the opinion that minority rights guaranteed by article 29 and 30 to govern and administer the institutions should not be granted today. I see this especially among very highly organized teachers associations. Their argument is that immediately after the independence, minority rights had some validity in terms of lifting up the minority communities in India, but today they've come a long way and have developed and have achieved parity and in many cases have excelled the majority. Today they need to be treated on par with other institutions, why give them special rights they would argue. On the other hand, we should not deny the fact that there

are instances of excesses and abuses of minority rights. There is growing awakening, awareness and lobbying about this in the country. It is easy to pick holes into the minority institutions which are not functioning properly.

This does not mean that articles 29 and 30 should be abrogated. This is our Constitutional right. We cannot survive in this country without these Constitutional safeguards. However, we should be cautious in exercising those rights in a proper manner. 25 years ago minority institutions could be lax in how they function. Today, minority institutions are being scrutinized and are under the scanner. There's a growing lobby against which we need to be even more vigilant. We need to be alert to any erosion of the minority rights and raise our voice in the right fora. Minority institutions have to be proactive in these matters.



## **Unemployment rate at 9.4 pc in 2009-10 fiscal: Survey**

According to the first national-level household survey conducted by the Labour Bureau under the Labour and Employment Ministry, out of 1,000 employed people, 455 were working in agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors during the period. This was followed by 89 people employed in the manufacturing sector, 88 in the wholesale and retail trade, 84 people in community services and 75 in construction sector.

The survey was conducted with a view to study the overall employment-unemployment situation in 300 districts of 28 states and Union Territories except the North Eastern states, a government statement said. It said in the rural sector, the unemployment rate was estimated at 10.1 per cent while in urban areas, it stood at 7.3 per cent of the total labour force.

It also revealed that out of 1,000 people employed, 439 were self-employed. Among the self-employed persons, majority were employed in agriculture, forestry and fisheries (572 out of 1000) followed by 135 people in the wholesale and retail trade.

The total worker-population ratio was estimated at 325 people per 1,000 people. A total of 45,859 households were covered during the survey, out of which 24,653 were in rural areas and 21,206 in urban areas.

*(<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/112684/unemployment-rate-94-pc-2009.html> accessed on 14 November 2010)*



# CIM Partnership Seminars with Friends Missionary Prayer Band - A REPORT

A 5-day training program for the emerging leaders in Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB) was held at Manimangalam, Padappai from 19th to 23rd Oct 2010. There were 43 participants, both men and women. Adorned with tranquility and away from the noises of the city, the venue provided a suitable atmosphere for fellowship and learning.

The resource persons from Christian Institute of Management (CIM), Chennai made a significant contribution towards equipping the emerging leaders in FMPB.

The following topics were covered.

1. Leading Towards Excellence
2. Conflict Resolution
3. Developing Leadership
4. Identifying Skills and Talents of Team Members
5. Planning and Implementation
6. Developing High Performance Teams
7. Transparency and Consistency
8. The Leader and the Resources
9. Keeping the Vision
10. Communication Skills
11. Committee Ethics
12. Handling grievances, Criticism and Complaints

The dramatic presentation of J.S. Anbu who handled the 1st three topics kept the audience spellbound. While explaining the deeper meaning of Christian leadership he laid emphasis on attitude. The statement that **one's attitude builds one's altitude** brought a powerful message to the potential leaders. The chief focus was on people-oriented leadership. The participants found the session on Conflict Resolution relevant and directly applicable to their ministerial contexts.

Another helpful session was Keeping the Vision by Aby Alexander. Having explained the meaning and power of Vision, he listed the reasons for dilution of vision. Besides he suggested ways and means to guard the vision from becoming hazy. Mr. Joshua Jesudason's sessions on team and its functions were a real boost to higher performance.

The session on Resources by Narendranath was a broader coverage of all resources available for service to humanity. Digging into the beauty and wealth of creation he made the audience see all possibilities and avenues to minister to the various needs of suffering humanity. He emphasized

and reemphasized the ministry in the market place.

The topics handled by Jeyakumar were like preparatory sessions for the candidates who will get into administration soon. Especially the session on Grievance, Criticism and Complaints was highly helpful to group, he highlighted the problems and address them effectively.

Varghese Jacob and Bennet gave the final touch to the training program. The need of transparency and consistency in Christian leadership was effectively presented. Similarly, Bennet's session on Communication created great interest among the participants to become effective communicators.

To be short, the team of resource persons was a good selection. The sessions were interesting, insightful, effective, practical and helpful. Besides passion, the resource persons presented their material with clarity using suitable illustrations. In addition to their prepared material their personal experiences were inspiring and motivating. Thanks to CIM!

*I.K. ABRAHAM  
Sec-HRD, FMPB*

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN CHRIST-CENTRED HOMES

Rev. Dr. Francis Sunderaraj



Marriage is a sacred institution where two people come together with a commitment to live together and love each other in a lasting relationship with the purpose of building up their home together for purposes intended by God.

In a Christ-centred home the members of the home know Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and keep Him at the centre of their relationship with each other and in all their planning and activities.

## Is a Christ-centred Home Exempted from Conflicts?

The answer is no! It is not a surprise? Conflicts are natural and they will be there. Each member of the family is different from the other, in their personalities, thinking, aspirations, likes and dislikes etc. God has made

us that way. So, when there are such differences, we are bound to have conflicts. Some of the common conflict areas between husband and wife are, sex, bringing up children and handling finance. The husband may not understand the biological cycle and the implication of it, his wife goes through. In bringing up the children the parents may have their own individual aspiration for their children. In a situation where both the husband and wife work tussle arises as to who is responsible for whose income. There are other reasons too. Conflicts due to in-laws, different likes and dislikes, recreation, sense of values, religious matters. Between parents and children the conflict areas could be, discipline, watching TV, friends etc. Furthermore, in the Christian home as each member makes all efforts to grow in Christ each

one experiences conflicts both within and with each other. Our levels of Christian commitment, maturity and understanding etc. vary. It takes all efforts to understand each other and to help each other to grow together as a family in Christ. If one is not watchful and does not know how to manage conflicts, it may lead to confrontation, painful tension and bitter clashes gradually leading to withdrawal of relationship.

## Watch Out!

Conflicts arise when our desires are not met. For instance, the husband may desire more time at work; the wife may want to bring up the children as she desires but the husband has his own plans for the children; the husband may have his own idea on how to spend the income of the family but the wife may have different ideas; and the teen-aged children have their own views of life which may not correspond to that of their parents. When the desires are not guided properly they may end up in demands and when the demands are not met with they result in unpleasant conflicts, constant confrontation and endless disharmony. Recently a young couple married just for a year came for counselling. The husband's desire was that he and his wife should live with his parents. But the wife's desire was that they should live separately. After a while the desire became a demand, which gradually grew into bitterness

and strained relationship between the two. When they came for counselling he was living with his parents and she with her parents, and they were accusing each other and unwilling to give up their demands.

Some desires are good and some desires are bad. For instance the wife has the good desire of having a clean home, and intimate relationship with her husband. Her desire is very good. But if she has the desire of spending most of her time with her prayer groups and church activities, neglecting her responsibilities at home, it is very wrong. Having a computer at home is good if you could afford it and know how to set your priorities. But sitting at it all the time and not giving enough time for your parents and household duties is wrong. Conflict starts if both are unwilling to give in. You are at the cross roads. You may dwell on your disappointment and allow it to control your life. It will result in self-pity and bitterness towards your spouse. It may destroy your marriage. Or you may seek God, trusting Him Psalm 73:25; James 1: 2 to 4; Continue to love your spouse and keep praying. God's promises are true. Romans 8: 28 and 29.

Unmet demands have the potential of working themselves deeper and deeper into our hearts. When we think that a desire we have is something we need or deserve, and therefore must have in order to be happy or fulfilled, we begin to demand. Some time ago a young married man came for counselling as his wife was not willing to live with him any more. The reason was he was a perfectionist. He wanted every thing at home perfectly clean and all the time wanted his wife to be a perfect wife according to his perception of perfection. Poor girl, she tried her best to meet his desire. But not all the time. Without any consideration he started demanding she be an ideal wife. At

one point the relationship snapped.

There may be validity in what we demand. But the trouble is that if we do not watch out it will lead to bitterness, dissension and division. When your demand is not fulfilled you start pressurizing your spouse by saying, "If you really love me you will listen to what I say." The problem here is your demands are centred around you and you judge your Spouse according to your own expectations and standards. You become a self-righteous judge. You and your spouse have a conflict over some matter and you both go to bed without resolving it. As usual you both turn the other side and pretend to sleep. Suddenly your spouse gets up and says, "Ok, I give up. It is my fault." What do you do? Instead of responding by accepting your fault and reconciling, you say, "See, I have been praying to God to speak to you and I am glad that He convicted you to accept that you are at fault". This is nothing but self-righteousness.

#### **How do we resolve our conflicts?**

People react in various ways. It could be by ignoring each other or indifference to each other, with subtle coolness and with drawing from relationship or by pretending as though there is no conflict whatsoever. Or with sullen or overt anger or confrontation, lashing out with hurtful words. Or withdrawal from the relationship.

But as believers in Christ we must resolve conflicts in our homes in the proper way. How wonderful it would be if both husband and wife make all efforts to keep their home a truly Christian home where the presence of Christ is always recognized, importance is given to forgiveness and harmony, the Word of God is learnt to know God's will and values in the individual and family life and Christian witness is maintained to glorify God. Even in such a home

conflicts may arise as the members of the home are of different levels of spiritual understanding and growth. When that happens resolve the conflict prayerfully, wisely and listening carefully with redemptive love. Pray for humility and wisdom. As some one has rightly pointed out,

1. Pray to God to give you the right spirit and understanding.
2. If you are at fault confess it to God and to your spouse. Parents too, if they are at fault they must have the humility to confess it before God and their children.
3. Plan your words carefully. Ask God to give you strength to control your tongue.
4. Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses.
5. Choose the right time and place. If it is between you and your spouse do not resolve the conflict in the presence of others. If it is still not resolved get the guidance of a spiritually matured and respected person.
6. Listen carefully (Proverbs 18: 13)
7. Let your approach be with redemptive love only to build up the other person. (Eph. 4: 29)
8. Do not play God in the life of your spouse because only He can transform people. Romans 12: 18; 2 Tim. 2: 24 to 26).
9. After resolving the conflict pray together and let your spouse or children know that you truly forgive and love them and not only by words but deeds also.

When conflicts arise in your home, remember that they give you and your family an opportunity to get closer to Jesus Christ and to live for His glory.

*Rev. Francis Sunderaraj served as General Secretary of Evangelical Fellowship of India for thirteen years and Evangelical Fellowship of Asia for eight years. He is an IMA Consultant and Urban Network Coordinator in IMA.*

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"Pray for the peace of JERUSALEM : May they prosper who love you" Psalm 122:6



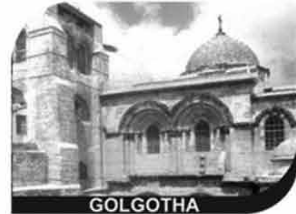
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