

LESSONS, LEADERS AND LIFE

by

Leen & Ria La Riviere

A book about leadership,
difficult situations and pleasant situations,
choices and points of view.

It is dedicated to every person carrying responsibility:
elders, leaders, youth leaders, parents



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Dedicated to Marianne,
who persisted when her securities vanished,
who remained faithful through times of hardship,
when she was abused by her pastor;
who became a good wife and mother,
in spite of being orphaned at an early age

Introduction

A book for people in leadership! What is the point of that? So many have been written already! And did those books produce better leaders and more wholesome situations? Sometimes they did, sometimes they didn't. All the same, this book is a challenge.

We were both 50 years old this year - a good opportunity to look back.

The organisation, which we have headed up since its birth in 1969, has grown enormously. Any lessons can be learnt from all that has gone on in both the organisation and our own personal lives. Some incidents were wonderful and others were sad. We certainly learnt a lot! And especially: how to handle responsibility: how to carry it, how to use it. For be warned: a little power corrupts a little, a lot of power can corrupt a lot!

We are certainly not saying that this book has all the answers. In fact, we want to make ourselves vulnerable and reflect honestly on how we handled certain situations. We hope this will cause people to be creative in their leadership, responsibility and authority.

Leen & Ria La Riviere

September 1996

NB

All situations are real. Names and situations have been altered for the protection of the people concerned. If anyone recognises a scenario: it is purely coincidental.

Edited and added version 2019

Our sons say

This book honestly reflects the way our parents managed to come through all kinds of situations. Life has not always been easy for them. Going against the flow was never a soft option and all this had an effect on us as us children. Often there were lots of people in our house. Fortunately it wasn't like that all the time.

Admittedly, all this activity has had its disadvantages. Dad was often away. Yet he still had time for us and he was there for us when we really needed him.

We have a lot more understanding now that we are adults ourselves. It does us good to find much that we can remember in this book. Some of these situations from the past Mum and Dad would tackle differently nowadays. So there is hope for them yet.

Actually, we are very proud of our parents. Their commitment, their outlook on life has achieved much.

One thing we particularly appreciate, is that, in spite of their position, they respected our own opinions and our own lives.

Magiel, Willem and Gijs,
(Leen & Ria's sons)

Foreword by Jeff & Romkje Fountain

Recently we visited together in Utrecht the exhibition 'Vier eeuwen Domineesland' (four centuries pastors), chronicling the role and impact 'dominees' (pastors) have had as spiritual leaders in this country since the Reformation. As the 'dominee' was often the most educated person in the village, his (the 'hers' only came in this century) was usually the final word in any subject. Spiritual leadership was exercised from the high pulpit, and primarily through the preached word. Even into early this century, 'dominees' dressed themselves distinctly in a costume of black knee stockings and three-cornered hats. For the exhibition a small chapel had been set up in the Catharijne Convent (the museum), where you could sit in wooden pews and listen to the recorded voices of well-known 'dominees' of yesteryear speaking with the authority of Moses descending from the mountain. Snickers of laughter breaking the almost reverend silence of the museum came from those with headphones hearing the pious expressions so harshly out of place in today's egalitarian society. On the wall of this chapel were these words from a poem: "Gij prediker, daar in de lucht, hebt gij dan geen woordje voor mijn hart?" ("Oh preacher, up high in the air, don't you have an encouragement for my heart?")

This book is about a very down-to-earth view of spiritual leadership. Certainly no one can accuse Leen and Ria of being 'preachers on a pedestal'! 'Pious' is the last word you can apply to them. In these pages they confront us with a host of real-life situations for which yesterday's responses are not appropriate; situations from which true spiritual leaders cannot flee into the safety of the study; situations which we often would rather pretend did not exist. Yet today's world is different from that of yesterday. And we need a generation of leaders who understand the times in which we live and know how to apply God's unchanging Word in a down-to-earth way.

The world today is very different even from that of over twenty years ago when we first met Leen and Ria. Jeff was manager of the Shekinah Company of singers, dancers and musicians, based in Canada with Merv and Merla Watson, when he first met Leen in England in preparation for Shekinah's tour of Holland in 1974. Years later Ria told us of the shock it had been for many and herself to experience dancing as a form of worship. At our first concerts in Holland, she said, people didn't know in which direction to look! Of course since then Leen and Ria have themselves pioneered many other forms of artistic expression in both worship and evangelism. Yet, as some of the stories in the book tell, they have often been misunderstood and criticised for their initiatives. They have certainly trailblazed the way for many others to follow.

The passion that drives them both is the longing to see Christ's Lordship extended into every nook and cranny of our world - not just the evangelical or charismatic ghetto. They long to see the kind of spiritual leadership needed for our post-christian and post-modern society, one that can discern between the content and the form of the gospel. While the gospel essence does not change, its expression has constantly changed through the centuries. Paul tried to be all things to all men, without compromising his message.

As they used to say in Youth for Christ, we need to be 'anchored to the cross and tied to the times'. In an age of changing times, that means constant adaption.

Leen and Ria have indeed led the way in adapting to the times. Out of their combined century of experience they share transparently their insights often painfully arrived at. By their own confession they have strong characters. That comes through in their writing style too. They admit themselves they do not always agree with each other. They do not expect you and us to fully agree with all they say. There are in-deed some passages in these pages involving tolerance towards others' sexual practices, for example, which we would express quite differently. Nevertheless, the true-to-life, very practical subjects they raise need to be wrestled with. The short chapters of this book provide a helpful starting point for personal reflection or even discussion in a leadership group. You may come to different conclusions than those of Ria and Leen. Fine! But if you approach these subjects with the same degree of honesty and openness, and a commitment to God's ways, you will be better prepared for the pitfalls of leadership in today's world.

Too many leaders are still dressed, figuratively speaking, in yesterday's costumes, preaching into nowhere from the high pulpit. But this book will help to start being practical and to have a true compassion for our neighbours

Jeff & Romkje Fountain
European Leaders of Youth with a Mission

1. Ria says

The thoughts in this book are no mere theories. Through stumbling and getting up again we learnt our lesson from experience.

Now that Leen and I together are 100 years old and celebrate our 'centennial', we wanted to write down our experiences as leaders, in the hope that it will be of some use.

Leen writes very honestly about his experiences as a teenager. And I experienced my share of ups and downs, too. All the same we have tried not to be negative about others but to learn from it all. (For my experiences, see my books)

We are very frank in this book and make ourselves very vulnerable. I hope that this openness will help the next generation to grow into positions of leadership.

Ria,
Leen's wife

2. *Ria's Husband*

I am Ria's husband. Ria's influence on my life has very clearly affected the kind of person I have become. I would like to state that quite clearly at this point in time. Sometimes that influence was very positive, challenging and stimulating, but at other times it could also be destructive - marriage can bring out the worst, too. And, as both Ria and I are strong characters, we had moments of great passion as well as times of wondering whether the differences were impossible to bridge. Those differences were so great, that we decided on a divorce after three years of marriage. Only a miracle prevented it.

The person I have grown into is also the result of having children. Their lives have taught us, and particularly myself, a great deal.

Who I am is also the result of my upbringing: a conversion, following Jesus, finding my purpose and calling. Upsetting my equilibrium, conflicts with so-called spiritual leaders all these wonderful experiences have contributed to my upbringing.

Is my story a success story? Am I a spiritual or artistic Rambo? Not at all. I have been faithful and consistent in developing my talents and calling. The idea that the Lord will look after you, and money will rain from heaven, is a fallacy. I never saw that manna. It was a matter of stumbling and getting up, growing and being pruned. Three times close to bankruptcy, three times back up from the ashes, with lessons learnt. It really is a miracle that we are still in existence. And I am very grateful for the support we had during difficult times. It did not always come from those we expected to help. We had support from some friends, the CNV (christian trade workers union of Holland), and the bank. The way people had faith in us and our work was amazing! How much more God must believe in me and our work. We did get support from our 'back benchers' later.

Did the opposition, the never-ending criticism, the disappointments make me bitter? They did, from just before my teenage until midway in my twenties. I would like to tell that story, because it strongly influenced the start of our marriage and the beginning of our work:

I grew up in a good home. My parents were Reformed, my father was an engineer working for Philips. At a very young age I had already been interested in culture, art, music, painting and drawing, the theatre and I read an awful lot. I read a pile of books a metre high each week between the ages of 10 and 13. My parents found out more about God in an evangelistic movement. That period of their lives was very significant.

In my first year at secondary school, I attended a youth weekend of that movement at my father's suggestion. I was probably the youngest person there. During that weekend people spoke about the work of the Holy Spirit. If you weren't sure whether you had received the Holy Spirit, you could come to the front and ask for prayer. As I wasn't

sure, I came to the front and sat on the front row. The speakers had not expected a child to respond, and did not know what to do. They started to discuss whether they should pray with me. There I was, on the front row, on my own, while they were discussing me! I felt very self-conscious! Eventually they did pray with me, after asking me questions to find out if I had understood them. After the prayer I did not see a special light, I saw no vision, I did not speak in tongues, nor did I roll on the ground. Neither was I unconscious, ecstatic or slain in the Spirit.

Leen was still sitting on the front row. He needed to work it out for himself and ought to go and sit at the back of the room.

The next few days showed that something had happened. Where the bible had been an important book before, now it was a living book which "spoke"; It communicated in an entirely new way - fascinating - and that hasn't changed. Another difference was that I found that all kinds of abilities and talents which must have been dormant, woke up and began to develop. As I was very well motivated to be consistent and to learn, I began to ask questions of the spiritual leaders. This appeared to break the eleventh commandment: 'Thou shalt not ask questions of spiritual leaders'. Were the questions of this teenager so remarkable? Not at all, this teenager just wanted to know more, understand more, be closer to God.

I was soon labelled by the leaders as a rebel: I behaved badly, I was even given a nickname: 'IQ' (because I asked questions nobody else dared ask). When I wanted to assist an evangelist for a whole Summer when I was 16 (putting up circus tents was an interesting challenge), they warned him about me ... When Ria and I wanted to get married, again, they warned her about me (so watch out, I am dangerous!). As a 16-year old, I saw through the story of the leaders: not all prayers were answered, not all the sick were healed, the poor and needy weren't important unless they had great gifts to contribute, theologically it was not consistent, because you could do what you wanted: God would forgive! (No room for repentance, confession of sin). What about the people who had problems? They were not 'in the Lord', they did not believe correctly. And if you did not receive an immediate answer to your prayer, or were not healed instantly, then the fault lay with your own faith. After all, sin was conquered, as was death, so hallelujah, glory to God: with your eyes on the soon to be expected return of the Lord (no later than 2000) you should not be bothered with unnecessary questions. There was especially no need for studying, you should go out evangelising, or give great gifts and definitely do what the leaders say.....

The trouble was that I had discovered that we have to stand before God one day and give an account of all we have done. Then, I won't be able to blame it all on the way I had mindlessly and willingly followed leaders. The responsibility will then be mine entirely. And I will not be able to blame the simplistic preaching and the discipline.

All hell was let loose one day when I asked what their opinion was on sex, masturbation and the like. Seldom have I heard more extraordinary, one-sided and contradictory ans-

wers. There were only two possibilities: either they were mad, or I was. As I wasn't, there had to be a problem with what was true. So, what was truth? Because they could not give me any real answers, nor could they openly talk about truth, I decided to go and search for the truth. If that movement was not right and true, then what was? In my appetite for reading I threw myself into the various world religions. I found much truth in Hinduism, Bhuddism, Islam, but not THE truth. The next thing was self-analysis: psychology, analysis. A lot of truth was to be found, but not THE truth. There was a lot of truth in every place I looked. The last thing I read in this period of 5 years of searching was Nietzsche. After reading "Thus spoke Zarathustra", there were only two possibilities left. Either Nietzsche was right and there was no God, no love, and nothing had any meaning. If that was true, the only meaningful thing left in the chaos was suicide. Or, Nietzsche was wrong, and there had to be a living God, who is the source of truth, normality, reality, beauty and love.

I'll never forget that, at the moment I reached this point, I felt as though two arms had embraced me and God said, "Boy, I am proud of you, you have sought the truth and you have found it, and the truth shall set you free". Those five years had been painful, had stripped me of false securities, and now all of a sudden there was God in all His greatness. Which is the reason I no longer accepted anything blindly but checked everything out for myself.

We got married (in spite of the various warnings). Through circumstances which were anything but coincidental, the Continentals crossed my path. God used that time to ask the question of whether I would develop this (music, arts) for Him. My answer was 'yes' and everything that has happened since has been because of that answer. Concerts, tours, many styles of music, more concert tours, stage arts, visual arts, books, magazines, publishing, the International Federation of Christian Artists, Seminars, Symposia, the CNV Artists Union, numerous committees, the Continental Art Centre, etc, etc. A snap shot of 1996 is very impressive (500 youngsters are trained every year, 300 concerts are performed, 150,000 people are reached). What needs a mention is that every time there was an important breakthrough, certain leaders were strongly critical.

In 1972/73 the Christian Press wrote that God only used the "spoken" word and that all these evangelistic concerts were nonsense. (Experience proved that around 30% of the audiences were non-Christians who definitely understood God's word brought in this manner; many became Christians. These so-called leaders dealt mostly with those who were Christians already - apparently they were jealous of our success. Almost every church now works with music).

We started the Christian Artists Seminars in 1980. And, again, the same people tried to make it fail. Such a pity, that they never attended a week of that kind - it would have enriched and blessed them greatly. In 1985 we began to promote all the stage arts. You guessed it: again there was opposition. (Nowadays, many churches make use of dance and drama.)

In 1987 I made a suggestion about the importance of artists' groups, the importance of visual arts. And, sure enough, opposition yet again. (These days, it is quite normal to have an organisation, or to work with visual arts.)

In 1989 we joined the CNV (the Christian trade union of Holland) and a democratic managing structure was formed: again there were questions, remarks and a lack of understanding from those same people.

At times, we sorely tempted to hit back. But what we did instead, was to bless the opposition and pray for our enemies. Other than that, we have not responded to their pressure (if we had done, none of what is quite ordinary now would have come into existence). We did, however, write books and studies as a response. These are now freely available.

Sometimes I felt like a bird that had to keep on flying and could not land anywhere. Thank God I managed to keep my motivation and faith alive. And it still is: very much alive and real and my life, work and leadership are founded on that. But it is no thanks to my fellow leaders and, alas, no thanks to their prayers and support.

What has become of those leaders? Some of them showed their lack of reality when it came to light that they visited prostitutes, were fraudulent, manipulated people or committed adultery.

In fact it turned out that one of them took advantage of my own father who suffered a year's breakdown and, in my view, all that brought him too early to the grave. Eventually some leaders did at last begin to show some understanding.

The pressures to give in and to join in their games have, at times, been great, certainly in the 80s in the music world. I resisted, because power so easily corrupts. That made me a few enemies. But how to handle them is a story in itself.

So, lots of things influence and shape a person. Love, faithfulness, faith, 'stickability', the ability to listen and consider and then make choices and take responsibility for them make a person into a leader. Do I want to be a leader? My experience with that kind of person is not very positive, so I prefer not to think about it and try to be a Christian in deed. If an idea is a good one, it will be supported by managers, staff, volunteers, members. The motivation needs to be based on the power and truth of the arguments and certainly not on manipulation!

Leen,
Ria's husband

3. Clothes

Sandy grew up in a Pentecostal church. She had always enjoyed Sunday School, life in the church and all the activities. When she was 14, she was proud to help with the toddlers, and later with the 6-8 year olds. She loved telling Bible stories. They were so beautiful and so true. One day the Sunday School leaders had a little chat with Sandy: she needed to do something about her clothes. Sandy did not understand. She was becoming a pretty teenager. She dressed according to the fashion and felt good about it. Yes, the boys sometimes looked at her, but was that so bad?

As Sandy did not understand what the leaders meant, the situation led to a dramatic outcome. The children's leaders reported the "uncontrollable" Sandy to the Eldership. They sent one of the Elders to deal with this "rebellious" child. The conversation took place on a beautiful Spring morning after the service. Sandy was looking marvellous and young, almost stunning. The Elder took her aside and spoke harsh words about clothes which had to please God: what Sandy was doing was attracting the attention of the boys. And if that got out of hand, it would be her own fault. And she also needed to be an example to the children. Otherwise she would not be allowed to continue in the Sunday School. "But", Sandy stammered, "I dress like this to honour God, not to seduce the boys!" That really made the Elder angry! "She even dared to come with objections! Maybe she needed some strict disciplining! This insolent and provoking behaviour had to stop!"

The damage was done! Sandy suddenly took a very different view of herself, of boys and of the church. Her innocence was destroyed. The only avenue open to her, was to remain faithful to her personal responsibility before God; she knew she was in the right, so there was only one choice she could make: discontinue the Sunday School work and leave the church, deeply hurt. Nowadays, Sandy only very occasionally attends a different church as a visitor.

Ria and I have come across many similar situations in various organisations and churches. Such hurt and damage was so unnecessary and such a shame! Surely there could be a different response?

In our own household we soon came upon the clothes, ear rings and later even piercings. As we saw all around us how much conflict that sort of thing could cause, we decided on a different approach and to focus on developing personal responsibilities. Our boys received a clothing allowance when they were still at primary school. It often got spent on anything but clothes. One winter, our middle son had no winter coat, but that was all part of teaching our children to be responsible. At times they looked quite odd which caused loving brothers and sisters in the church to think that our children were a burden to us, but unfortunately these fine people could not see the underlying wisdom.

Our children stumbled and got up again, and the whole experience led them through

developing from torn clothing, via designer clothes, to their very own style. Our oldest is now a fashion designer, the middle one is conservative in his taste and the youngest specialises in street wear. And they know exactly what they want - wasn't that the intention: to bring them to maturity?

Visiting clothes stores was always very entertaining: all around us there would be angry parents arguing with equally angry children over what the children should wear, while we watched with pleasure as our children made the most amazing choices and then proceeded to tell us how good they looked!

We followed the same principle when ear rings came into fashion. The boys asked Leen if they could have ear rings, and Leen was not very keen. So the boys employed a method we had introduced in our approach to bringing them up: why was he not keen? Leen had to come with his reasons. It took the boys a couple of months to expose the lie in every one of these reasons. What remained was Leen's subjectivity. It was only his view that they did not look good. His subjectivity could not survive the confrontation with objective criteria! Leen could only conclude that the boys were right, that he was only posing his own view, which was no real argument against wearing an ear ring. So the boys got their ear rings.

At one point they even wore more than one. The youngest (who now is an adult) has piercings which all look very interesting. The point is that our boys did not wear their clothes, ear rings, piercings or later even various hair colours out of protest, or to embarrass their parents or to shock others. They did it because they thought it looked good or because it made a statement about them.

We will never forget the day the youngest came home (he was 16 at that time) feeling that life was "green". So he dived into the bathroom and reappeared half an hour later with green hair!

Surely leadership is about creating situations in which people can arrive at their own considered choices and then accept their own consequences? That is only possible, if there is an opportunity to choose differently from the parents' taste, or from the elders' views. Taste should be last thing people argue about.

4. Music

Sixteen year old Henk sat in his room, listening to music. Christian singer songwriter Adrian Snell's music was really great! It touched you somehow. Gradually he turned the volume up, and up again. He was really taking it all in - he wanted to experience the music and those meaningful biblical word with his whole body!

The rhythmic low tones of the bass drum and guitar could gradually be heard in the kitchen. Mother was cooking the dinner there. As she was preparing the food she was mulling over her every day cares. She had been quite concerned about her son Henk lately. Sometimes he was completely unbearable. No doubt it was due to encroaching puberty. Still, she was uneasy.

The other day he had refused to come to church. They had argued over that. Was Henk still a believer? Oh, if only he would stay on the right path with Jesus. And recently the preacher had spoken about how young people could be seduced and indoctrinated with music. Especially rock music and guitars. Dreadful! How could she help and protect Henk against that?

Suddenly she realised that she could hear 'boom, boom'. What was that? That awful rock music in her house? Quick, she had to protect Henk from himself. Mother ran upstairs, where she could almost lean against the music outside Henk's room. She threw the door open. Quickly, before it was too late, she grabbed the LP from the turntable and broke Adrian Snell in two with a triumphant look on her face. There, she had saved Henk!

The sudden silence was deafening, and a completely baffled Henk couldn't comprehend why his mother, who was a believer, despised the famous Christian artist, Adrian Snell.

Two viewpoints on listening, two viewpoints on taste, two viewpoints on faith, two life styles, all causing so much conflict in families and churches. It can so easily escalate.

Based on the particular points of view held by certain leaders and pastors, we had to conquer all these opinions one time, in order to get to the heart of the matter. Hiding in the church ghetto and declaring that rock music was "of the devil" was not very helpful.

Leen grew up in the world of classical music. He found it hard to learn to understand rock and pop music. As a teenager he had occasionally listened in secret to the first pop station - Radio Luxembourg - and afterwards suffered from a guilty conscience. The rhythm was attractive, it drew you in, but still you knew that it was wrong somehow.

Ria was attracted by the rhythm of pop music as a teenager. She wanted to go dancing, but that was not allowed by her parents and brother-in-law (who was a minister). Here, too, there was a prejudice against contemporary music.

It was remarkable, therefore, that Leen and Ria brought the first Christian pop group to Europe (New Hope, 1974) to aid evangelism. The intention to evangelise justified the style: to the Jews a Jew, to the Greeks a Greek. But could we actually say that we enjoyed that type of music? Indeed, should we?

It all came to a head during the first Christian Artists Seminars of 1981/82. Various countries were represented by pop and rock groups which were neither Leen and Ria's taste nor choice but to which they were obliged to listen. Rock music from Semaja, Damaris, Joy and Petra was real, deeply convincing and actually beautiful. It was a good opportunity to discover where one stood with regard to rock and pop, both Christian and secular. We observed this journey of discovery in our own household. And we learnt to listen to each other: parents to children and children to parents. And all this in order to put aside our prejudices!

This is how we discovered, together, the tremendous impact of The Beatles, of the "cool" instruments of surf music (eg The Beach Boys) and, later, the honesty of U2; the incredibly beautiful compositions and lyrics by Queen, the wonderful soul of Diana Ross and the great and inspirational performance of Tina Turner.

Biblical standards include beauty and truth: pop and rock introduced us to a world with such content many years ago. Unfortunately, there is also a lot of Christian (gospel) music which does not reach this standard: it is sub-standard! For our children it also brought an end to all the disagreements. Among other things, we started to watch MTV as a family which led to good conversations on composition, arrangements, language, visual scope. It taught us mutual understanding and the ability to criticise fairly, although as a family, we did not always share the same points of view: it was all part of our learning to tolerate and respect other people's opinions.

Isn't that leadership: putting aside one's prejudices, being open and wanting to get to the heart of a matter?

5. *Nude*

A church elder went to visit a certain artist. Rumour had it that there was pornographic material in the house! So the elder dropped by to see what was going on, ready to place the 12-year old daughter under protection and, if necessary, discipline the parents.

This had all happened when a friend (from that same church) had been to play. She came from a very protective family. The girl had been shocked to see a painting of a nude hanging on the wall in the living room. She had gone home and told them about it, and her parents had exaggerated the story somewhat, and soon the rumour was flying round the church leadership.

The couple, who were artists, were startled at this accusation at first, but they soon saw the funny side and asked the church elder to join them on their hunt for porn. No porn to be found anywhere, just that painting of a nude which was beautiful! Although the elder preferred to look away. An interesting conversation followed. It was obvious that some people did not enjoy the freedom they spoke about, because their vision was troubled. Nudity was automatically viewed as bad, as sinful. But in the artists' eyes nudity reflected the beauty of God's creation, and surely one could enjoy looking at that creation, especially people who enjoyed their salvation!

A similar situation happened to us once at a Christian Artists Seminar: Evie was a beautiful ballerina and a fantastic dancer! But Evie's pleasure was ruined when an elderly sister reprimanded her because her whole body was so visible through her dancing clothes. That would give men the wrong ideas. Evie burst into tears and asked to talk to us. It turned into a very good discussion!

As a result of the fall nakedness was associated with evil and we had to cover ourselves; but our salvation allows us to enjoy beauty again (including the human body). That beauty can be misused and turn into pornography. But that beauty can also be very aesthetic which results in beautiful works of art which one can have at home or go and view in a museum.

The conclusion was that the viewpoint of the beholder determined the choice of how nudity was viewed. If the eye is clear, then everything is beautiful and clean; but if the eye is dark, then everything is seen through evil.

Hence the reaction to the dancer's body-suit: apparent nakedness in the theatre, leaders complaining about the short length of the skirts. Those skirts aren't really too short, but it does say something about the way those who complain look at things: are they just seeing nice legs, a beautiful body, or are they struggling with unclean thoughts. If the latter, then they need to be set free from those thoughts. Handling nudity and a person's own feelings (whether in beauty or in lust) is also connected with growing up, and growth.

In our family, nudity in the arts has never been a problem. Aesthetically it is so different from porn. All the same, our boys were also found to be looking at porn books, all well-thumbed! Ria found a couple when she put away something in one of the boys' cupboards. Normally we respect every drawer and shelf belonging to the children: we never went through their things. So this was particularly unfortunate. After discussing it together, we decided not to confiscate anything but to make the occasional humorous comment. And one day it all came out and turned into a good opportunity to talk about, sex, relationships and commitment.

We think that every teenager (Christians included) sees a porno film at some time or other. It is more important not to faint with embarrassment, but to handle the situation creatively. Preaching hell and damnation at such a time will only make matters worse. Allowing teenagers to learn to handle nudity and art in a healthy way will turn them into healthy adults. Of course, in order to give leadership in such a situation, one does need to be able to overcome one's own embarrassment and dare to call everything by its proper name.

6. Searching

John always faithfully accompanied his parents to the meetings. His father was a preacher. John was a fine example as a son. He got involved in church life and work, in spite of his studies.

All was well until, one day, John declared that he could not continue and wanted to figure things out for himself. Parental panic! All their securities disappeared. And things got worse as John became a squatter, neglected his studies and became almost depressed after reading Nietzsche and other philosophers.....

As it was no secret that we sailed through a few stormy seas with our children, these people asked us for advice.

First we need to let go of our expectations, which can become a heavy burden to our children. Once this burden has been removed, better contact can be established. And it is also very sensible to encourage a child (or whoever has been entrusted to us) in their search, rather than inhibit them which might lead to frustration and often even alienation. And don't blame them, rather encourage them in love, for the truth shall set them free. That light brings healing, freedom, health.

The last thing they need is *our* answers which would rob them of their authenticity and creativity. But do ask them sensible questions (and let them think and search). They really do not need a "preachy" conversation. This would mean a step into the dark: from the frying pan into the fire. But, "somewhere" out there is the hand of God.

What else can we do? At home: pray for them, bless them, and expect good things. And don't despair if their search takes a couple of years. Once they make their choices, they become the pillars of the future. They won't be luke-warm Christians who blow with every wind. That type of believer never grows up.

One of our sons took seven years over his search. How much we prayed for him! But he found his answers and now stands strong in his life and his faith. Another son told us over dinner one day that he was not really sure anymore what he believed. We took this remark on board and encouraged him to continue his searching. This son has roller skates and spends most of his time on the streets. In that kind of life only what is true and real remains, the rest soon crumbles. Recently he was on a religious broadcast. It was very clear that he was a believer, but also that he had respect for people of different views, and he expressed himself very well. This boy had grown up - but you won't hear any pious jargon from his mouth.

Leadership is having the courage to let people search and to support them in their search. That produces growth and deep roots. Those kind of trees stay standing upright in the storm. But those kind of people will not agree with everyone nor will they turn

into one of those evangelical hyper persons who run from one exciting event to another.

Creating real pillars of strength in an organisation or church requires working on the type of leadership, so that it becomes more open, more democratic and more consultative, and actually delegates. And that means the end of one-man shows and dictatorship-type situations. That different kind of leadership, among church-members who have completed their searching, will produce a healthy community.

7. False security

Cam grew up in a Pentecostal church. The third word he could say as a toddler, after "mama" and "dada" was "Alleluia". He was a real Pentecostal boy and he faithfully took part in the weekly church routines: children's toddler services, then children's services, and later youth services. Everyone was pleased with Cam: he knew all the right answers to the questions, he said "Praise the Lord" at exactly the right moment, he was the third or fourth person to pray in a prayer meeting, he raised his hands at the right time. With each next year Cam became more correct and less free. The leadership occasionally quoted Cam as an example: now there was a boy who was really committed
.....

But nobody noticed how pious Cam was becoming, how unreal. It did not show until a visiting speaker took part in a prayer meeting where Cam was also taking part. This visiting speaker had a lot of experience and soon saw through it all. In a private conversation, he pointed it out to the pastor who muttered a little, after which the visiting speaker said, "You know what? That boy should do something outrageous for once in his life! He should 'kick' the organ!"

We have all come across those 'nice' youngsters, or 'nice' adults - in our movements and churches: but they go over the top. They lose the happy medium between pious fiction and the reality of a sober faith. These people often appear to be the pillars of the church because they get so involved in everything. But let's have a closer look at those activists: are they in it from noble motives or out of fanaticism. Suppose it is the latter - such a person becomes a negative influence on the church in the long run, because he or she cannot see things in perspective, or recognise the correct balance, relationship or proportions. Spiritually healthy workers are much more useful than fanatical ones, no matter how hard they work.

In that situation, too, leadership has a role to play. What do we do with these pious, fanatic people? One can think up a number of scenarios: they could be asked to remain quiet, they could be quoted lots of Bible verses and so on. But that is not very helpful. Wise counsel and good guidance are needed to sort these people out, and that takes time. Some people don't want to be guided, and eventually they crumble - a hard painful lesson.

Have you ever wondered how they came to be so pious, so unreal, so fanatic? It could have happened under our leadership. We carry great responsibility. Every leader, elder, preacher needs to be very conscious of the fact that he or she gives out signals; he or she could contribute to people becoming pious, unreal or fanatic. We recommend a healthy evaluation system, to which leaders, elders and preachers should submit themselves. It is very healthy to examine ourselves closely from time to time, good self-assessment keeps us in balance.

There are various other suggestions. It is usual for organisations and companies to organise discussions twice yearly about how everything is going, such discussions would be very useful in church work, Christian organisations and movements; involving full-timers as well as all the volunteers. Such a discussion maintains healthy relationships, offers scope for correction and employees' complaints can be dealt with in an open frank manner. It serves both sides. A report should be written of the discussions, which should be signed by both parties and kept. This would create a healthy system of guidance.

Why do we sometimes find that trouble and difficulties in movements and organisations recur in a 5-7 year cycle? It often is because all kinds of concerns accumulate, and when the directorate or the eldership get involved, they overreact and the whole thing explodes. Have you ever wondered if this happens because the managing structure that is being applied is not working?

Within our own organisation we have such a guidance system. It is healthy, shocking and healing. The worker hears something, but so does the management. Since we have put this into place, we have no more workers' explosions. This system is also applied to volunteers (and there are quite a few) and everyone who comes on a tour with a group (around 450 each year). This certainly maintains healthy relationships and healthy commitment. Added to that is the fact that one cannot automatically move from one project on to another: first there needs to be an assessment, so that possible difficulties or problems can be ironed out. Which means no immediate continuation. That person needs to change first, sort themselves out first

So back to the beginning of the story. If we train little children like spiritual monkeys, we will end up with over-pious, fanatical followers. A good close look at children's work is needed. One Sunday school teacher loved having his children (of around 10-11 years old) sing, "Know my heart, and know my ways, oh Lord". And he would follow on with a long story about holiness, sanctification, etc. It must be obvious that that would lead to the opposite effect.

8. Abuse

Lisa's parents had been truly converted. They were settled in their Baptist church. Lisa was still searching, but her parents wanted her to attend the youth services. There was such a nice youth leader. At first Lisa had some really great conversations with him. But then that changed....

After a few months the parents noticed a change in Lisa's reactions. They could not understand it. Until one sad Sunday when Lisa screamed that she was never going back to that rotten church. For that nice youth leader had abused her....

The parents' world caved in. And that was only the beginning. The parents phoned the minister who was shocked. Following a brief chat with the youth leader, the minister dropped by to tell that the youth leader had not meant it to happen and that it would not happen again. If God forgave, then they should leave it alone from then on. Both Lisa and her parents were so perplexed at this short-sighted reaction, that they didn't know what to say to the minister.

A few days later Lisa's parents phoned the minister that they were not satisfied with this. The minister said he would take it to the council of elders. The following week Lisa's parents received a letter from the minister (on behalf of the council of elders), saying that they were disappointed that the parents took such an unspiritual point of view! They were reprimanded! They had to cease spreading unrest, for there had been a talk with the youth leader (who was kept on in his function as before).

A few days later Lisa's parents wrote back, that surely it was scriptural to give an opportunity for confession and repentance. Such sin should surely be dealt with? And who was considering the emotional, physical and spiritual damage done to their daughter? Surely the perpetrator would have to confess, resign and be placed under discipline regarding his dreadful behaviour?

Shortly after, Lisa's parents received, by registered post, a letter refusing them any further entry to the church and to communion. They first had to repent of their rebellious unchristian behaviour. They had to believe in their leaders and to submit to them, and they had to accept that the minister and the council of elders were right. In the meantime, Lisa was under heavy medication, often had to miss school, was scared to come within 500 metres of the church and needed strong support. And the perpetrator? He was still the youth leader. No wonder life was hell for Lisa and her parents. Eventually Lisa's parents talked to some close friends. A visit to the police station followed. They reported it all. In the end the perpetrator was sentenced and all the local papers had got hold of the story of the behaviour of the minister and his elders.

And Lisa? She is slowly beginning to recover. Her faith? How can one believe in a God who lets a youth leader, the minister and the elders treat a person so badly? The parents? They still believe, but not in that church and certainly not in those leaders. Very occasionally they come inside a church. And the local community? They don't

want anything to do with Christians, their activities or the Gospel. It's simply become a 'no go' area.

Such a sad story. And there are quite a few like it. How can something like that happen? Looking at this story, it appears to be a combination of a simplistic theological view (forgiveness without guilt, confession or repentance), of a wrong structure (improper handling of a complaint, no democratic control, no managerial openness) and pure stupidity (covering everything up rather than bringing it all into the light).

How should it have been dealt with? Obviously, the complaint should have been handled better. The minister and the elders should have sided with the victim. The leadership, together with the girl and her parents, should have reported everything to the police. The perpetrator should have been clearly confronted with his crime and its consequences, and should have been brought to the acknowledgement of his guilt and to confession and repentance.

As the perpetrator and his victim obviously cannot be part of the same collective process of restoration, the church should side with the victim and provide good long-term guidance in close co-operation with professional help. Should the church evict the perpetrator? No, but he can't stay in the same congregation either. The victim cannot possibly cope with that. After he has confessed, he, too, needs to be given proper guidance, professional therapy and be found a spiritual home. The perpetrator and his family need to go forward, too. If he ends up in prison, then counsellors from that other congregation would need to visit him. Connections with the old community, church, environment need to be reduced as much as possible. One source of help and counselling that seeks to bring healing cannot support both the victim and the perpetrator. Naturally, some people might wonder if such matters should not be dealt with internally? There obviously are degrees in the seriousness of certain crime. In the Old Testament we see an escalation from compensation, via an eye for an eye to capital punishment. Therefore, there must be situations which are dealt with internally, but the more serious the crime the more it should become public. We should never put ourselves in a situation that might result in our being accused of covering things up. The things we hide eventually start rotting. The best approach is to be open and bring things into the light.

What also needs to be said is that there is a personal responsibility. Of course it is a good thing that people are happy in their church. Of course it is good that children are happy in their Sunday school or youth meeting. And, of course, it is good to trust those responsible. But there is a critical dividing line. Parents have a responsibility toward their children and should never hand over that responsibility to third parties. It is always most important for people to be alert to what a child learns at school, how things are going at school, how things are with the teachers. Those same principles also apply to Sunday school, youth, children's workers, youth workers, etc.

In the Biblical context one is also personally responsible for what goes on in church or the community. The Bible teaches us to control violence, which includes how we are involved in politics, among other things. Church leaderships make mistakes, too, so the church members should not keep quiet, but make a clear stand for what is right.

Elders should be appointed for a set length of time and preferably be subject to re-election. They should be accountable to the church. The council of elders should strike a balance with regard to the influence a leader or preacher is allowed to have. A leader, too, should be in position for a limited period of time and then seek re-election. Even though leaders have built up a healthy church community, such leaders show their maturity if they voluntarily submit to Biblical and democratic principles at a certain point in time. Far too often good leaders can end up as dictators. Far too often people do not leave their lives open to scrutinisation and this only leads to a hardening of opinions and eventually leads to damage.

As our own organisation began to grow, we quickly appointed a council of management to which we made ourselves accountable. This worked well for the pioneering phase of our work (1969-1985). The next phase saw a consolidation (1985-1995). At this stage every possible sector of the organisation was changed into a democratic structure. Decision makers were chosen, trained and have to be accountable in members' meetings.

A complaints procedure was put in place and an openness of management. We still are leaders, but our decision-making is completely submitted to a consensus of governors. And if we make very grave mistakes (eg ethically, fraudulently, spiritually, etc) we can be voted out. This might appear to many leaders as threatening. But we are glad of it, because:

- a. We have nothing to hide;
- b. If we are good leaders, other governors will confirm that;
- c. This will allow our movement to mature, to gain support and will allow it to continue after we are gone;
- d. If we really do something wrong, then there needs to be a provision for the movement to discipline or even fire us. The movement is of far greater importance than the personal interests of leaders.
- e. Accountability is very healthy and necessary. Our own experience has led us to act in such a manner as will facilitate the facing up to, and dealing with, potentially serious conflict so that schisms are avoided and good sensible governing guidelines are developed. Good leadership realises that it is necessary to progress from a pioneering phase to a democratic phase of consolidation which will provide a foundation for further growth. It makes no sense to let weak structures keep bad leaders in power. Leadership is also about understanding how leadership needs to be applied. This varies according to the situations, the stage of development and the culture/environment in which we live.

Should a situation similar to the beginning of this chapter present itself within our movement, we would definitely - albeit in tears - report it to the police and make sure that the different parties involved are provided with the counselling they needed. True leadership, in our opinion, can only represent justice.

9. Opportunity

We have attended several leaders conferences. They were very useful for making contacts, maintain old contacts, but they also brought some sad events out in the open.

Ella was a minister's wife. The four of us had lunch one day. Ella looked very smart: a true leader's wife. Always behaving in the correct manner to her husband, the minister! Fascinating! The minister talked a lot about how he was used by the Lord, his answered prayers, how he activated young people, enthused the elders, and about his growing congregation. Yes, God was really using him. Wasn't it wonderful to be a minister? The longer this conversation continued, the more uncomfortable we became Then the minister said that they were doing so well, that he occasionally even allowed his wife to get involved. Until that moment his wife had reacted quite correctly - she was beautifully trained. But at that moment she shuddered slightly. Just for a minute her mask slipped and we could read a deep hurt in her eyes, as if she was saying: "I am misunderstood, abused, a failure, I'm burnt out." But immediately afterwards she was back in control, and said, "But, John, what can be more fulfilling than supporting you in your walk with God". John hadn't noticed anything. John the minister continued boasting....

Walking back to our room after lunch, we were appalled at so much short-sightedness and so much hurt. Would this marriage last? The man was blissfully unaware. (In later years, things indeed ended up in an enormous crisis between those two). We began to have a good look around at that leaders conference, to see how the various married couple functioned.

Sometimes it was laughable: a lot of men who walked around all 'macho', with very correct wives following behind. The more these 'macho men' showed their evangelical muscles, the quieter their wives were. We got a very strong impression at that conference of frozen, stony wives and blind husbands who were an insult to their wives.

That picture and that sad experience stayed with us for months. We mentioned it to various friends and artists. How, when we know freedom in Christ, can there be such ignorance, such oppression, such discrimination in the evangelical camp. We came to a number of possible conclusions:

- A theological misunderstanding, that leadership is a man's business! It escapes many people that the Bible also calls women to every task (see Chapter 27 of "The Kingdom in Deed" by Leen La Riviere).
- Lack of belief that God sees men and women as equals, in spite of their physical and emotional differences. 'Different' is not equal to 'inferior', in fact it is complementary.
- Mistrust the fact that men and women uniquely complement each other. Fear of the unknown, fear of submitting to, and trusting, the other.
- Many men suffer from insecurity which is often compensated for by lording it

over others. This wrongly met need for self-esteem unbalances the situation still further. Any comment is taken personally, is seen as an attack on the ego (some even feel that they, as 'God's anointed', are not to be criticised), and a downward spiral results, causing the man to prove himself even more, become even more 'macho'.

- Lack of vision: what is one's true calling, task, purpose, 'destiny'. A man who knows his calling is not threatened by leaving room for women to develop theirs.
- Some women don't seem to want to develop themselves and consider the status quo very comfortable - so that not much will be required of them.

Why could we not forget about this experience? Because our movement has always been based on gifts and calling. It never mattered whether someone was male or female, and neither should it matter. Our reasoning always was this: are there any talents? Then develop them to bring glory to God, to mature the person and to benefit society. If there is a calling on your life, then the same applies: so get going! This has resulted in female leaders, female conductors, female committee members, female artists, and so on, beside the men. It makes for a fascinating, wonderful and interesting co-operation.

In this situation, leadership is not: 'letting someone have a go'. That denies the other person's uniqueness. Leadership supports others and makes sure that each person is able to develop their gifts, that room is made for people's calling, that there is a framework that allows for developing everything into a beautiful bouquet of diversity.

10. In the Lord

Charles led the worship in church like no other. It was fantastic. Both Charles himself, the worship group and the congregation all considered themselves as very special in the Lord when Charles handed over the service to the speaker, after an hour or so of praise. So the shock was all the bigger, when Charles walked out on his family one day and ran off with the first soprano from the worship team.

As could be expected there was great bewilderment. How could this have happened? And we were so close to God! The singing really brought us 'into God's presence'. What happened seems so crazy!

There is great bewilderment, if one bases things on subjectivity, on experience. The stronger the experience, the closer to God people feel. This hype and ecstasy eventually escalates into a kind of evangelical hypnosis, kicked off by praise and worship music. If this is followed by a couple of rows going down 'in the Spirit', people soon start saying this the Holy spirit is at work. But is He really? Is this some sort of mass hysteria? It will do no harm to have a very close look into this. We don't deny that emotions are involved, but they have to be kept in balance with our thinking, our commitment to others, through practical living and behaviour that is consistent with our beliefs.

As we have been actively involved in the use of creativity since the 60s, we know as well as anyone how easily emotions can be manipulated through music, dance, visual art, theatre, etc. The only thing that playing on the emotions evokes is an aesthetic experience. That is quite different from finding and serving God. The New Testament tells us that one day the Lord will separate the sheep from the goats. Note how the goats always think that they have served God. "Haven't we prophesied in your name, in your name driven out demons". And Jesus answered, "I don't know you, get away from me!" And then the Lord says, "Anything you haven't done to the least of these, you haven't done to me..." Jesus then becomes very practical: visiting the sick, visiting prisoners, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked - in other words: acts of love and compassion. Are we showing any of those?

Jesus sharply corrected the believers of his day: they thought they were included if they abided by the law and made their sacrifices on time. But their faith, hearts and lives hadn't changed. They didn't live in their beliefs.

So what is the difference regarding believers, or leaders, or the worship leader from our story, who often intensely confess God with their mouths, who see visions, who fall down but who do not live up to the truth in their deeds, love, or compassion. In the Old Testament the Jews thought they could draw close to God by obeying the rules ... Various believers think that being ecstatic brings them close to God ... It is obvious that this is a dead end road, if our daily life does not reflect what we say and believe.

Leadership means bringing a healthy balance between religious emotions and the content of faith and daily living. Leadership means leading by example: our life is a measure by which the Lord will judge us, rather than check how faithful we were in our tithing, how many meetings we attended, how often we went down in the Spirit, how many visions we saw, or whether we read our bible daily or prayed for at least one hour a day.

Leadership should be used to show that we will be judged on how compassionate we were and how much love we showed to the poor, the outcast, the widows, the prisoners, the foreigners, the

11. *Children - a cross to bear?*

The movement organised another annual conference. People were coming from all over the country. The main leader carefully checked everything, he indicated exactly how much space should be left between the stage and the tent poles and the distance to the first row of chairs. Audible to all, the order of service was checked. Finally, he said, "And remember that I want absolutely no children on the grass in front of the stage, you keep those little rats away..."

When you are helping to put such a conference together, helping to get everything ready, such a remark stops you in your tracks for a moment. Why consider children to be irritating little rats? Didn't Jesus say that the children could come to him? Didn't Jesus especially bless the children? Since when is believing a matter for adults only?

At that moment that leader fell off his pedestal. Or was it just an unfortunate 'slip of the tongue'? Unfortunately, it wasn't! He was a missionary's son. His father had never had any time for him. He had been sent away to boarding schools. He projected those frustrations and did not allow children any room in his spiritual movement. And neither did he give any attention to his own children. In the end they did not know how to handle contact with affection, sexuality, stress or people. His sons went wrong with women, and divorces followed. You reap what you sow.

Let's look around. How often are a leader's children not a blessing but rather a nuisance? And many of those children, when they become adults, appear to want nothing to do with the Gospel, the church or their parents. Some have even gone completely off the rails. A sad harvest has been reaped.

It makes a lot of sense for those in leadership to consider all this thoroughly and to act upon it, otherwise it would be better, like Paul, for them to remain unmarried.

When we had our own children, and at the same time became more and more busy with "the work of the Lord", it all escalated into a serious situation: we were strangers to each other and I had to discipline the boys more and more seriously. It wasn't the children's fault, that they were hard to manage; no it was the fault of our prioritising and time management. So we made some very clear agreements:

- We were definitely going to be at home three evenings per week to invest into our home life: enjoyment, games, attention, talks.
- Either the Saturday or the Sunday was for the family.
- 'Work, Christians, church, or people' were not mentioned at the dinner table (children so often become difficult when they hear about the hypocritical behaviour of so many Christians, or when they observe the hypocritical behaviour of their own parents).
- We did not want to be interrupted by phone or by visitors during mealtimes.
- If we, as parents, had a difference of opinion (and we were very strong charac-

ters, so things could get very 'heated') we sorted it out between us, without any children present.

- The children were given the right to have us called out of a meeting if they really needed us (and it did happen a few times). Just that could show the children that they were more important than all mum and dad's busy work.
- We decided to concentrate on essentials in bringing up our children, rather than less important matters such as clothing, hairstyles, taste, choice of music, etc.
- We did not require of our children that they were model children. They were entitled to their own choices, to making their own mistakes, to their own taste. They weren't there for the greater glory of mum and dad.
- They did not have to come along to everything we went to. Our children were given a chance to build their own lives. During primary school they came along to meetings. And even then they had the choice between going to the Sunday school or staying with mum and dad. They often chose the latter, much to the annoyance of the children's workers, but we tried to explain that this was the child's choice and that we backed them completely in their choice. We had to laugh, when we overheard some of the staff members talk about our children at one of the seminars, "that those La Riviere children were such a cross to bear for the leaders". That remark showed us that our children were managing to stand for themselves! According to those staff members, they were a sight for sore eyes: torn jeans, they smoked, they fell from trees, they wore ear rings, wore weird hair styles or hair colours... But we, as parents, saw the courage to make their own choices, to be creative, to develop their own personalities, to carry their own responsibility! We always enjoyed the way they looked.

This brings us back to where we started. Good leadership means knowing how to deal with children and teenagers. In our view, attention and money needs to be invested in their living space, too. If we invest in our youngsters in word and deed, we invest in the future. Leadership also involves placing one's children above one's work (the same applies in a secular job or obligation) or one's calling. That means that parents need to make clear agreements with their children, and with each other. And then to be consistent.

12. Career

The pastor proudly told us about a new married couple, who had thrown themselves into church life. They were pillars in the church. They could be found almost every night in the building to help with the various activities. This couple was a real example to others who just stayed at home. A year later the couple divorced. The end result was bewilderment all round and a very depressed pastor.

We remembered a conversation that we had with that pastor. We questioned whether it was wise to let that couple be involved in so many things? What was known of their backgrounds? Had anyone tactfully visited them at home? He waved away all our questions. What nonsense, those people were a gift from heaven.

If only they had dug a bit deeper, it might not have come to this. For, unfortunately, it often happens that people bury themselves in all kinds of church work and other religious activities. Far too often this is to escape from the need to sort out their own affairs at home, at work or in their family. A good leader should not be taken in by such seemingly wonderful commitment and input. If the background or motivation of such workers is not wholesome, it will eventually lead to unwholesome situations in the movement or the congregation.

Some have failed in their secular career. Or they have been really frustrated by their employers. Activities within the church will then provide a lot of freedom, but the foundation is rotten. Within a short time, these activities become an alternative career. They can prove themselves here; they will matter here; eventually they turn into little dictators, who manipulate and oppress others. All creative and spiritual development is eventually made impossible by these so-called 'servants'. We have to toe the line completely, dance to their tune in terms of behaviour, choice of words, taste and clothing. Be honest, look around! How many of those you know are like that?

What is the solution?

- Check someone properly before giving them responsibility or leadership. Carrying responsibility and taking on leadership is very important. It needs to be taught. People need to sort themselves out regarding their motivation, their past (parents, school, work, etc) and their present, and their hormones! It is very easy to say, "I'm doing this for the Lord!". To us it sounds rather suspect. And it would certainly give us cause to thoroughly check out someone's background.
- Secondly, people need to be taught how to lead. Too easily people just pray any old prayer. Too easily people are blessed into, or out of, something. Are they also gaining technical, professional and managerial know-how in order to lead or govern? Oh, the Holy Spirit will do that? An often-used argument. I

wish you well if you are hoping to build your organisation, your church or your movement on such loose sand. Don't be surprised if that eventually goes completely wrong. A congregation or a movement is like a spiritual 'company'. The bigger it is, the more order, strategy and management is needed. And that is possible without seeing systems or structures destroy inspiration. Many people went to visit Dr Cho's church, the largest Pentecostal church in the world, in Seoul. Everyone was impressed with the spiritual success. But I did not hear enough mention that this phenomenon is made possible through good training, strict control, professional management. Even situations like Willow Creek are only possible with thorough technical preparation and management.

When our work first started we quickly put a number of workers to some key tasks. They were so highly motivated and spoke so well. They knew how to get things done.

But they were nowhere to be seen a few years later when we were facing an enormous financial disaster through losses. 'No, the Lord was leading them elsewhere'. 'No, it was someone else's fault'. 'Yes, the leadership must have committed some sin...' But to have stayed and faced the problem would have shown a nobler character.

We will never forget that awful experience. We felt betrayed, abandoned, alone. Could we have prevented this? Maybe, if we had looked harder and deeper for their true foundations at the start. But one can't tell from someone's vague, pious jargon. So what are the signals? Watch for: people's attitudes to their possessions. How do they furnish their home (is it a 'home'?). How do they treat their children? What does the neighbourhood say about them? What are they like at work? What are they like as a married couple towards each other (and how do they resolve conflict)? What are their short- and long-term aims regarding themselves, their lives and their family?

Leadership means investing time in other people. It means taking the time to see through pious jargon to what really motivates them.

Leadership also means designing a plan to lead these people from unreality to reality. After all, a balanced leader stands firmly in reality, has learnt to listen, to see, to fathom, to delegate, to give democratic direction and is prepared to be humble, able to apologise and willing to be vulnerable. He will not 'write off' those whose motives are dubious, but help them to improve, and to grow in maturity and responsibility. A leader will not allow him or herself, nor anyone else, to hide behind cheap slogans like 'It all belongs to the Lord' or 'The Lord suddenly led us in this way'. Leadership must be consistent with how we let people treat others. So it is certainly very healthy to check out people's motives.

13. Telephone terror

Half past eleven at night. Van der Beek, the pastor, and his wife are already asleep. Suddenly the telephone rings. Van der Beek wakes up and moans, "Oh, no, not again!" He grabs the phone and, sure enough, it's sister Aarderma, again! "Could the pastor please pray with her; she was in such a state; she was so lonely; she really was in trouble!"

Sister Aarderma had already phoned twelve times that week. Van der Beek liked to be a good spiritual counsellor, so he didn't like to have set appointments. No, everyone should be able to get in touch with him. But that Aarderma did not allow him to get on with anything. And now it even cost him his sleep at night and that affected his whole household. What should he do?

This example will sound familiar to everyone in leadership. Sometimes we are torn between feelings of responsibility and servanthood and the inclination to run and hide. What should we do?

At one time we were very much involved in the counselling and leadership of a church. We frequently found ourselves in this kind of situation where, day or night, convenient or not, people phoned or turned up on the door step. This led us to categorise a number of needs and problems. And that, in turn, brought some order to our family life.

Category one

All sorts of problems that can easily wait a day or so came under this category. We learnt to ask every believer what the problem was, why it had to be dealt with right now, and why, for example, it was not possible to make an appointment for the next day. If that turned out to be acceptable, because the person(s) would still be there (and their problems, too), then we were not going to give in and be manipulated into acting NOW.

Category two

This includes various problems which, when discussed, turn out to be of a medical kind. In that case we were not going to start meddling ourselves, but would involve doctors, specialists or hospitals.

Category three

These were really acute needs. Experience from 10 years of solid counselling has led us to conclude that these do indeed happen from time to time, but are, in fact, quite rare.

At least 70% fell into category one, 20-25% into category two, and 5% at the most into category 3. With regards to the 70% in category one: many people's real problem turned out to be a need for attention, but they phoned up for the most remarkable of reasons: 'they felt threatened', 'they thought they had sinned', 'they had had a prophecy', 'they might have seen a vision', 'they need a lot of prayer', '.....', and so on.

In our counselling days there was one lady, who was a notorious drinker, a spiritual parasite who frequently managed to draw all attention to herself, so that there was not enough left for those in real need. That type of person can completely choke the life of the church community if no limits are put into place.

In the case of this lady, we will disclose that she was elderly, had remained unmarried and was quite bitter. She had always prayed for a partner and had then waited for her knight in shining armour to come riding on his white horse. She had done nothing herself, and now blamed God, the church and especially happily married couples for her loneliness. So she was taking revenge - subconsciously. A house move had brought her into our congregation, after wreaking telephone havoc in another congregation for years. It was very difficult to help her change her behaviour patterns.

So it is very important for those responsible, those in leadership to be, and remain, quite alert regarding how much attention to give, and where. Try to apply the categories and put them into practice. If you don't, people will become conditioned to a kind of care-dependency. Too much care can become a curse, as they will be denied the opportunity to mature by facing their problems, or through learning to deal with their problems, or by learning to live with a problem instead of putting blame onto others.

Our help, care and prayers should help to rehabilitate people so that they can try to help themselves. But even so, they need to take responsibility for themselves. By giving problem cases special attention, we create an unhealthy dependence rather than an ability to sort out problems. Leadership is: developing discernment as to how to sort out a problem and then to support people in tackling their problems for themselves.

A missionary once told us that it was, of course, very good that so many Christians sent so much food at a time of starvation. Unfortunately, that did not solve the structural problem. That missionary would have preferred to have been sent a few water pumps and an agricultural expert who could pass on his knowledge. If that was provided regularly, there would not be any more hunger.

It is the same with people in need: we should not try to cure the symptoms, but teach people to be independent.

14. Management - a blessing or a curse?

Brother Harris was a pious man. He had been to Bible College, had attended a DTS (Discipleship Training School), and later an LTS (Leadership Training School) with YWAM. Of one thing he was sure: everything depended on prayer. Prayer should be the engine of the church. So there were prayer meetings for just about everything. This worked very well for a while, but after a few years all those prayer meetings were not enough to keep the congregation in unity. He considered it 'moans and groans'. No need for consultation! So a few faithfuls kept on praying. Brother Harris was bewildered when, a year later, there was a big split in the church. All the praying had not been enough to resolve some obvious problems. Brother Harris stayed behind, hurt, full of doubts, and feeling helpless.

A whole category of leaders have come along, but they obviously think that structures, management and organisation are wrong. No, everything needs to be done in a spiritual manner. Surely the Holy Ghost teaches us? So we need a lot of prayer and little consultation. This often goes hand in hand with looking down on worldly affairs like employment agreement, management, organisation, and the like. Some view that as completely contrary to a true spiritual life, 'otherwise Jesus would have had an expert on organisation with him, surely?'

Don't be surprised if the above mentioned situations do occur. Research shows up a 7 year cycle. People become believers, they discover the bible; they develop a life with God; they develop their gifts; they mature. And once they have matured, the trouble begins. These people want to serve, to support, they want responsibility - but the kind of leaders described above don't know how to handle them. That then causes conflict. Both parties feel misunderstood. In the absence of discussion, points of view become rigid. The leaders see it as an attack on their calling and therefore an attack on God, and the other party sees a person change into a dictator. But didn't God want a collective leadership of wise people and elders? If they are not careful, the conflict turns into a split, or the most valuable people leave (ie those whose gifts are developed and who have matured).

In our movement - which is also very creative - we aimed for maximum development of gifts and maturity in all kinds of areas. Even so, the situation has remained good in spite of the fact that big differences of opinion did occur.

We would like to mention a number of useful tips, which may help to turn the 5-7 year cycle into something useful.

- The development phase needs a different type of leadership than the phase of mature co-governors/elders. While people are maturing and developing, leadership has to be directional, and obviously needs a structure, but one that is different from the next phase.

That first phase motivates, inspires and facilitates initiative. It encourages and challenges.

- When children become adults, parents become equals and discussion partners. If parental authority is too strong it will cause division; therefore it would be counter-productive to refer to calling, authority, anointing, etc. The children have grown up, so they carry their own authority and responsibility, including the possibility of making different choices. Leaders should relate to such people in a completely different manner: advising rather than decision-making. The most the leader can expect to be is the 'first among equals'.

In the second (consolidation) phase (and subsequent phases) the following are important:

- Good, regular consultation (weekly work meetings).
- A good well-functioning governing body where the leader does not force his opinion on others. The leader needs to learn to listen well, to set the spiritual tone, to let everyone have their say and find the general consensus. And if he is the president of the college he should only use his casting vote if that is necessary. But it would be better to hold back a little longer and work towards that consensus.
- Ensure good management, bringing in people with the correct qualities. Delegating everything (including budgets!). Install a monthly feedback system. And then let these people plan and implement everything the elders or governors have decided.
- Learn to look for compromises. People easily see something as a personal attack. Points of view easily become rigid, or people start saying, "the Lord told me that..." (the moment that happens, the structure has already weakened and may be beyond saving). Not without reason are we warned, 'don't be too inflexible'. Leaders need to be bridge builders.
- A pioneering phase requires a pioneering approach: leaders need to get involved physically rather than just make the decisions. Everything depends on them. But that phase will pass, when people draw alongside and are ready, willing and able to take up responsibility (even if they dare not ask). Then the leadership structure needs to change: a small governing body needs to be widened, new members/elders need to be elected for a set term (4 years). After that, a re-election procedure is set in motion. All finances need to be clearly accounted for. In short: openness is needed from the leadership, where those responsible voluntarily submit to democratic church (or movement) control.
- Whatever is being said: listen first, count to a hundred and don't take anything personally. All criticism needs to further the Kingdom, even if someone gave their personal best for years. We need to learn to be less easily hurt.
- It would be quite beneficial if a church's leading minister moved on to another congregation at some point. Job-rotation can prevent a mass of problems.
- Movement leaders need to be clearly aware of which phase of the framework they are in. Don't alienate yourself: keep working towards the consensus.

Democratic leadership is a very interesting and creative challenge, and it could result in strong benefits all round.

The third phase is when matters are tackled with agreement from elders or leaders and not before! That brings strength. That will create new initiatives and dynamics which can be broadly put into place.

15. Declaration in the safe

After years, it came to light that Pastor Beekman had not been all that precise in keeping his private and church expenses separate. And as he had been so trusted by his sheep the money he took from the church funds had gradually increased. At first he had been able to justify his actions quite well to himself! They were, after all, his sheep, so why shouldn't he shear them? But, when he became increasingly fanatical about compulsory tithing and it was very unclear what that money was spent on, more and more questions were being asked. One careless purchase of an expensive car caught him out. He was sentenced and the disillusioned sheep scattered.

So many evangelical churches are uncontrolled trusts. And who are the Trustees? The minister, his wife and a trusted third person. This is fine to start off with, but there needs to be openness right from the beginning. Books should be checked. An annual report and accounts should be produced. Why be secretive if you have nothing to hide? There is no darkness in the light, so open up and avoid all this trouble over money.

When we progressed from the pioneering phase to the consolidation phase, we considered all these things carefully. What causes leaders to stumble?

- Money! One needs to be very strong to resist temptation. It is good to trust in the Lord, but do take precautions. That's why an extremely tight accounts control was put in place, together with yearly reports.
- Power! A little power causes a little corruption. Greater power causes greater corruption. So we installed new governing structures. This also prevented all kinds of misuse of authority. We regularly have to report back. And all actions and activities are looked at against the written policies. We ourselves and everything else are all tested against these objective criteria.
- Sex! People go through complete changes (more about this in other chapters). So we created a system, where we and other leaders mutually watched over each other. Every person has moments of weakness, but one does not need to sin. (The weakest reasoning I ever heard from a leader was, "The devil made me do it..."). Practical precautions are called for. So we made very specific recommendations about what a person should or should not do, if he or she is travelling alone, etc. Once, we pointed out some potential dangers to a female performer who often travelled with her manager, while her husband stayed at home with the children. Nonsense, she said, there were no dangers. Her husband was a 'strong believer'. And the Lord would look after her. It won't surprise you to hear that two years later she turned out to be expecting her manager's baby. Sheer stupidity. However 'spiritual' you are, don't ask for trouble! There are many more examples: a man should not go and visit a woman alone. (It is a small step from spiritual to physical comfort).
- Drugs! Of course, cocaine or speed is quite a strong matter. But there are many kinds of drug that could affect a leader. Power can be addictive. The

adrenaline of ever newer and greater activities can itself be an addiction. We know people who are completely hooked on coffee, tea and food (and who keep on preaching about holiness and against drugs...) And what about possessions? They, too, can be very addictive: a more expensive car than another minister; wanting to fly more often than another leader; more buildings than another... bigger meetings, etc.... We feel that there is a strong connection between pride and the various addictions we have mentioned.

So quite a few things can corrupt leaders. Do they realise this? We first did, in the time when we were a small organisation. We made an agreement that we would both voluntarily resign, if either one of us did something that was not in order, whether ethically, spiritually, financially or morally. We also stated that, if either one of us became very ill or died, the other would voluntarily place him- or herself under the counselling care of three appointed people. These people would have to ascertain at a particular point in time whether the person placed under their care was fit to take up his or her concerns again. Until then: no decision-making or voting would take place. Why? Because this kind of thing is potentially very influential on a person's judgement. A movement should be governed well, even in the face of difficult personal circumstances. This declaration is still in the safe and the members of the governing council have a copy. We ourselves wanted to place on record that leaders consistently need to act ethically. Word has to agree with what is practised.

Later, a central mission statement was written, which has to be agreed to by every worker and leader. That, too, is a healthy sign.

After years of experience, a well-known evangelist went off the rails. That was followed by calls for accountability. Unfortunately, many such initiatives have stalled. All the same, our advice is that pastors and leaders should choose to put a system in place which, through accountability and discussion, will help prevent them from falling into temptation.

Good leadership carries an obligation to lead by example.

16. Spending time

It would be good, obviously, for leaders and pastors to spend time with the Bible. But they need to spend time on many other things, too.

An 'anointed' speaker became more and more famous. He spoke at increasingly larger meetings. But it took all his energy to produce such a 'grand performance'. Afterwards he was completely, utterly empty; so empty that eventually he could not handle it anymore. And one evening, after an enormously successful meeting, he went off with a prostitute in the hotel where he was staying. It was as if a dam had burst. From then on, every time he gave an important talk, the evening ended in this way. After a number of years it all came to light. The people's bewilderment and the ruin of this speaker were awful.

We also knew of similar things happening with a couple of well-known Christian artists. All those years ago we could not understand it. How could that happen? People who loved the Lord with all their heart, who wanted to serve Him and preach about Him, went so badly wrong.

It all became clearer when we ourselves travelled, had to speak and were called upon to give of our best. Whether you are a top athlete, or a speaker, it makes no difference. A first class performance is expected of you and it takes all your energy, and afterwards you are drained! It is a very natural process and that emptiness needs to be filled. This can be done in a healthy way (meditate in silence, take an hour or so out to listen to music, go for a walk or a bicycle ride, or do some exercises), or in an unhealthy way: and then we don't go for the rest to re-charge our batteries, we go for the kicks. That could mean tranquillisers, drugs, drink, sex or gambling.

The real issue is, how to handle stress. Such a top level performance gets the adrenaline going and this brings about the necessary chemical and hormonal changes. It is quite normal to feel the need for tranquillisers, drugs, drink, sex or gambling. It is not of the devil. So, praying about it, and punishing oneself, etc, doesn't help. And giving in is stupid and contrary to the Biblical principles and values. So, one needs to adopt a behaviour pattern to cope with the adrenaline and the stress, after a big performance.

Dealing with these kind of situations seems to be a forgotten subject at leadership training courses or bible college. We know someone who was so hyperactive after preaching that he filled up on chocolate or junk food. After such a big performance a person is vulnerable and defences are down, so there is a need to protect oneself (as Jesus did by the Jordan, and later in the desert; Elijah on Mount Carmel and Elijah's flight to Mount Sinai).

But there are many more areas where we need to learn to handle situations

- Social behaviour, table manners; How does one conduct oneself in a hotel, in company; how to approach those in authority; how to handle financial concerns and possessions (learning to be business-like).

A well-known singer came from a village. She sang like an angel. Too quickly a record company 'discovered' her and suddenly she had a lot of money, went on national tours, stayed in the best hotels, but no-one had taught her how to handle such situations, there was no personal guidance. Within a couple of years this beautiful, lovely and upright girl was completely ruined and became very arrogant. Things got so bad that no-one wanted to work with her anymore and eventually she disappeared into obscurity. Where did the problem lay? With the company that failed to teach this girl how to deal with all those aspects of fame. 'Going public' requires learning to handle all those situations. It would not be a bad idea to include such aspects on leadership training programmes and bible colleges. Speakers who become famous stumble into the self-same pitfalls. Beware the temptations of fame!

- And what about use of language. Sometimes the more wellknown a person is, the more he or she waffles! It all sounds very pious, very beautiful, very 'close to God', but a lot of talks that go on longer than 20 minutes consist of repetition! Beware of waffling and just say it as it is! It is exactly our 'religious-speak' that hinders people seeing God. Have you ever noticed how fast recently converted people lose their fresh, natural way of speaking and get conditioned to Pentecostal-speak, Baptist-speak, YWAM-speak, etc?

17. Identity

Over the years, the minister became more and more desperate. People would not get involved! He was always moaning to his colleagues: they did not want to do anything, they weren't able to do anything. No, those sheep were useless.

God's people find themselves facing this sometimes, in churches or movements. The question is, is this correct? There are two kinds of leadership: Either we are

- Always pointing the finger at what is wrong.
- Or, encouraging people in their gifting, and emphasising what goes well. There is a saying that goes, 'It easier to catch flies with syrup than with vinegar' and that is so true. Which, of course, is quite different from flattery or manipulation.

A church or a movement is no different from any other active group. An active group can be a blessing or a curse to the individual. If that individual is damaged, he or she cannot make any contributions. So it is worth investigating how the group and the individual relate to each other.

The style of leadership, the manner of speaking or acting, the content of what is said or done, can have a negative effect on individuals, it can choke them. This often happens when a leader is an insecure person or has a low self-esteem or has an identity problem. Such a person needs to exalt him- or herself, which is only possible by pulling other people down and that lays a weight on that community. He can't afford to encourage other people's gifts and talents, because that will show him up. That heavy, choking blanket can be seen for example in very strong social control. 'We dress like this in our church...' etc. What effect has that on people? 'I am not able to do anything', so they do nothing.

According to the Bible, everyone is creative, everyone is created in God's image. The parable of the talents challenges us, too, not to bury our treasure but to get working! That parable really works! If we use our talents, they increase! If we bury them (our style of leadership could cause them to get buried or stay buried), the outcome is death.

Being biblical means encouraging each other to develop everything that is in us. A church or movement should be a breeding ground for all kinds of talents. By developing people talents and gifts, we also develop their identity. The Bible gives us an excellent summary of God's aspects:

"I Am that I Am".

"I am the Alpha and the Omega".

"I am the risen one".

"I am the way, the truth and the life",

And so on.

The "I Am" mechanism should stimulate us into both developing ourselves and encouraging others to develop. Doing that makes our community open, so that people, dynamic and creative, will get committed because they are involved.

We should stimulate every gift, not just the spiritual ones. In the parable, where the goats are separated from the sheep, the goats say, 'Haven't we prophesied in your name?' We could continue: seen visions, fallen down in the Spirit, given leadership, etc - but the Lord doesn't know these people. Meanwhile, the sheep were very busy being practically involved. All practical talents were used to the utmost. And we, as leaders, should facilitate to the full everyone's practical commitment, for it brings about their maximum potential which causes everyone to grow.

This does mean the end of the 'one man show', but does that matter? Didn't Paul say, that when we all come together, everyone should contribute something? That is not the same as a one-hour singing service and a one-hour sermon.

18. Intolerance

The Christian pop group 'New Hope' visited Poland 1975. It was the first time that a Christian music group had been there. The group members originated from the 'Continental' who thankfully had learnt to adapt to different social, political and church settings. The first day things didn't seem right. 'New Hope' arrived at a large cathedral: how would the priest and the people receive such modern music? The priest and the committed people in the church thought: how wonderful that those youngsters from the free West want to come here and encourage us with their testimonies and their music; but the music is very modern, is that acceptable?

Both parties obviously had to get to know each other. There was every chance that this first visit was going to be failure. Tensions ran high during rehearsals. But, suddenly the ice broke when one of New Hope's members felt moved by a painting in that church. Instinctively, he took a candle, lit it, and placed it in front of the picture, stood there deep in thought for a moment before he went back to rehearsing.

A number of the committed church members (in particular a few old women) saw this. During the next few hours it went round like wildfire that these western youngsters weren't heathens coming to disrupt their beautiful cathedral, but real believers. (Lighting a candle is synonymous with a prayer).

That evening this church which had 3,000 seats was filled with 6,000 people. That one gesture had warmed the people's hearts towards 'New Hope' and the evening was an enormous success. Even though the music was modern and resounded round the church building...

Cross-cultural communication is so important! And certain cultural, religious customs can so easily separate brothers from each other. Many of those customs have their origins in certain traditions. Within that tradition they have intrinsic value and they are deeply meaningful. The problems come when people begin to consider certain forms, customs and traditions as more important than those of a different denomination! No matter how different customs and traditions are practised, the core of the faith, namely the beliefs that are contained in the creed, is the common ground: we all believe in God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit. What links the various denominations is immeasurably more than the different styles of services meetings, customs and traditions.

Leadership involves going before people and emphasising the common ground as well as respecting other denominations, rather than emphasising the differences. And emphasis on difference can lead to arrogance: "our church sees better, believes better, knows God better", etc, etc. Such arrogance often leads to intolerance and sometimes even to misguided views on evangelising: ie converting a member from a different church to yours. And very occasionally it leads to a kind of persecution, social exclusion, and the

like. That is totally contrary to Jesus Christ's message. He emphasised love, compassion and real care for the underprivileged. And he was not very fond of theological sharp shooters.

So, do we throw out the baby with the bath water? By no means. History has directed faith in many different river beds and this led to many different practices, customs and traditions. Leadership needs to accept history and show that those river beds came from the same source. Whether the water is green, yellow, blue or brown, it is still water!

Streams often result from a new channel running from an old stream. Sometimes there are tensions between the need for renewal and rules and rigidity. Sometimes the new measures are just as rigid as the traditions they try to overcome. Sometimes that results in a power struggle and we lose sight of what we are there for.

Good leadership should put emphasis on what binds us together. Good leadership teaches us to follow ideas rather than people. Good leadership encourages 'followers' to show respect and tolerance towards others, including those of a different background.

Good leadership will try to avoid conflict which could potentially result in a new movement whose source will dry up after a while. All the negative energy will be used up and what then? What had been their true motivation? If there is nothing left, such a movement or group will cease to exist. "That which keeps us apart" is therefore a bad idea. The true motive is found in being yourself.

19. Millipede

During counselling sessions it came to light that a certain woman had been abused as a child. Her counsellor carried out his task very correctly and consistently. Layer after layer was peeled away. It was an awful story. But things got better with every session. Then one day something snapped. The client opted out and fled into the arms of a different Christian helper. That person thought they had a monopoly on wisdom and believed everything the client said. Which did not help the client at all. To date she is still in therapy, and only because the second person thought they were so wise that they did not need to consult the first counsellor.

It often happens that people do their own thing completely, which wastes a lot of time and keeps people in their problems. In a situation like the one described above, there is no shame in finding that you can't help a person any further. It is very important to know one's own limitations. In professional circles such a person, and their case notes, would be referred to someone else. That prevents misleading people or their having to start all over again.

Sometimes, it seems as though pastors and leaders are expected to know and be able to do everything. It would be considered a personal failure if they weren't. But hasn't God given the church different people with different gifts? We should stop thinking that we as leaders have to do, know and handle everything. Realise your limitations and make sure you hand work over to others when they have the expertise to complete the task. And learn to work together with secular organisations, too, such as voluntary organisations that provide psychiatric or physical care and out-patient provisions, etc. We need to remember that a church and its leaders can offer only limited resources. Don't muddle on, but involve professionals, whether you are faced with homelessness, psycho-somatic problems, abuse, incest, rape, manipulation or whatever else. Don't try to be the spiritual 'macho man' who thinks your prayers are going to sort everything out. And do realise that it takes years just to learn to live with certain difficulties. Don't try to be a millipede, you'll only end up burnt out or you might die of a heart attack before your time.

20. Listening

An elder was visiting Ella without knowing that, during her teen age years, she had gone through a dreadful time of spiritual abuse in a different church. That was years ago, now. She had since moved and got married. But still, from time to time, the memory of those traumatic experiences came back to the surface. Oh, she definitely believed, sometimes read her Bible, but due to the negative experiences during her teen age, she just could not manage to last a whole service or to come every Sunday. Out of his concern for her, the elder had dropped by to have a talk about it all. But unfortunately, he asked his questions a bit too strongly and Ella's thin layer of protection broke and, yelling and shouting, she threw the elder out of the house..

We can learn a lot from this incident: the need to listen carefully, noticing someone's reactions, reacting correctly and especially asking the right questions. And certainly not forcing the situation. We have noticed that many leaders have no idea how thin the ice is, on which some victims stand, even many years later. It might have been a serious accident, or an attack, or incest, or rape, or physical abuse.

The layer of protection is thin and easily breaks if situations occur that are very, or even slightly, similar to the dreadful thing that happened somewhere in a person's past. That's why it is so important that leaders are able to listen well, listen, listen, and listen again. They also need to avoid stop suggesting that they know what the person is going through.

21. Help

We (Ria and Leen) have supported a number of people in very difficult situations for at least a year. One client had been badly abused as a girl. Usually, the three of us met together, but one evening Ria had had to go out and I stayed behind with the client, to spend the last fifteen minutes just re-capping. Suddenly I picked up a very strong, low frequency, signal that was being transmitted by my client without any words being spoken: 'If you come closer and want me, you can have me!' Involuntarily I moved back a bit. I could not believe that signal. How could she feel like that after she just told us a whole list of dreadful sexual experiences. I finished the discussion as quickly as I could and showed the client out. I was confused.

At the time we were working in close consultation with a professional organisation and I went and talked with the lady who led this. I learnt a lot from that discussion. She told me that I had indeed read the signal right, but that it was, in fact, the last thing the client wanted. She explained that the natural defences (which everyone has) can be destroyed by certain experiences. The result is that signals sent are misread with all their consequences. She would not have resisted if I had indeed approached her. This happens to both men and women, as the defence mechanisms have been destroyed by incest, rape or abuse. My reaction had been right: don't follow it up, keep your distance. The lady also explained that failing to recognise or understand these signals did result in quite a few counsellors getting involved with their clients.

We have come across similar signals regularly over the years. Only now do we understand them, even though we handled them very carefully. We also found that clients could recover mentally from such a trauma, and that the natural defences did return though usually it took years.

In conversation with various leaders we found that quite a few did not know any of this at all - which is why we mention it here, so that people who are seeking help, will really find it.

22. Enjoyment and relaxation

Pastor Miller was always running around for the benefit of the church. He did not consider his own needs. And if, on his own birthday, someone asked him for help, he would leave his own birthday party. Miller's intentions were completely honourable, but he did not know when to stop. Mrs Miller had enough when even on their holiday, her husband telephoned the elders every day to see 'if all was well'. And Mrs Miller told her husband straight that, "if things weren't going to be different from now on, he had better start looking for a different Mrs Miller!"

Well done, sister Miller! Shame you didn't do it earlier. As leaders it is important for you to know where to draw the line. If you don't, others will decide your life for you and you become a public possession. There is nothing wrong with making clear agreements within the family regarding time, time management and how time is spent. And, above all, learn to relax and have fun, or otherwise your life with your partner and your children as they grow up will pass you by!

In our household, too, there were always people, needs, situations. But then we found that all those people took up so much of our time, that there was none left for ourselves and our children. They should be our first priority. We realised it in time and took drastic action. But it was too late for some things. I never gave my oldest son a bottle. Other people did that, because we were so 'busy for the Lord'. So now we intensely enjoy our first grandchild. And we tell other leaders: Do stop, why don't you all go to the cinema, go to the beach, go and fly to an unknown destination for a long weekend, or disappear to a hotel. Please, do learn to relax and enjoy yourself.

23. *The God who isn't there*

Marc was involved 100 per cent: first as a worship leader and then as a youth leader, he attended some courses. Soon he was asked to speak locally, because he was so honest, so direct, so keen and radical. "A new star was born", Marc's star rose extremely fast. He was speaking all over the country, speaking at national gatherings. Marc was the 'up and coming' man. And then, suddenly, it seemed as if he was plodding through syrup. Everything was an effort, nothing came easy any more. Marc noticed it and called on the Lord even more often than usual! But He did not seem to be anywhere near. Heaven was made of brass, the sun of doubt shone mercilessly and Marc thought he would die in his wilderness experience. Help was nowhere to be found. Marc was alone, completely alone, in a silent universe.

Everyone goes through a wilderness experience at some time or other. It seems as if those who carry responsibility or those in leadership experience that to a much greater extent. It should not surprise us to find ourselves in a wilderness experience which could last a short while, or could last years. It is necessary so that our roots go deep to hidden resources of inspiration and creativity. A wilderness experience matures us and all hypocrisy burns away. It contributes to the deepening of our faith.

The different possible reactions to a wilderness experience are remarkable. These can range from acceptance and patient endurance to total bewilderment, anger and depression. What causes these differences? Apart from personality differences (in particular our emotions) the main reason is the view we have of God:

- Do you believe that God hears your every prayer, because you serve Him and He knows you? You will be disappointed.
- Do you believe in a Santa Claus kind of God, that He will provide your daily bread and pleasures? You will be disappointed.
- Do you believe in an automatic God: you throw in the correct prayer or the right Bible verse and the correct answer can be pulled out of the wall within the hour? You will be disappointed.
- Do you believe in a God-of-the-kicks? In other words you want to experience increasingly stronger emotions: worship for longer, pray more intensely, go 'out under the Spirit' more often: you will be disappointed.
- Do you believe in a Wodan God: someone who throws hell and damnation with a hammer onto us: you will be disappointed.

Find out for yourself what view you have of God; it is an important key to returning wilderness with your faith strengthened. People will ask: how and what is the right way. We deliberately do not tell you, otherwise we might end up being a "closest to God through the wilderness ministries" people. Everyone will have to find their own way: it's the adventure of testing.

It is possible to withdraw from the wilderness. Don't do that (even if it seems attrac-

tive). The results are disastrous, people who come unstuck, who get stuck in certain approaches, words, gestures, manners of speaking, terms, visions: the renewal of the Spirit will stop and a person will become a living fossil. The wilderness strips away all false insecurities, and there is room for a fresh new wind to blow. And suddenly you begin to realise that there never was a Santa Claus God, but that the true God was always with you, near you, in you, in the wilderness, too. You have made another step into maturity.

24. Going peacefully

Sister de Witte was elderly and sickly. She often spent more time in hospital than in her home. The Church took good care of her. Every morning, noon and night there was a prayer meeting at her bedside. But she far from breathing her last breath. That was considered a miracle each time, although she did not actually get better. But nobody noticed how tired sister de Witte was, so very tired, and that she longed to be with the lord. She had been ready for a long time to exchange the temporal for the eternal.

That church kept sister de Witte alive through their prayers, while she would have been better served by their prayers seeing her into eternity. Sister de Witte should have been blessed that way, rather than having her life unnecessarily prolonged and making it into a cross to bear.

We are mentioning this situation in order to show that leaders sometimes lack the insight to see what is appropriate in a situation. Believing in Jesus Christ's victory is not contrary to seeing someone to a peaceful end.

If we take this idea of 'victorious living' too far, we deny ourselves the opportunity to come alongside a dying person (against better judgement we can keep on praying for the healing, for example, of an AIDS patient). And we haven't got the answers or any other help for those who have to learn to live with dreadful trauma (we might think that a quick prayer will resolve everything). Neither do we always have the ability to stand firm in life (we might think that reconciliation resolves all argument and conflict like some kind of amnesia). And we have no answers at all, if we try find God in all kinds of trouble and praying does not help. Salvation, victory and deliverance can become sticks in the hands of leaders who then batter those with problems even more and make them even more helpless.

Leadership places victory, suffering, answered prayer and unanswered prayer, reconciliation and unsolvable trauma in the right perspective. There is no script, as each situation is different and requires a loving and compassionate heart, as well as discernment.

25. Encounter

Brother Bijlstra really wanted to reach his local neighbourhood. From a booklet he had learnt that the answer lay in getting to know people. So he went fishing with neighbours, watched sports with them, even had a beer in the pub round the corner. But when everyone realised that he only did it in order to convert them, they retreated a few steps. Oh, he was a nice enough man from a good background, but they did not like this evangelistic behaviour. And Bijlstra just could not understand why he was so unsuccessful in his efforts.

A theologian once said that the best moment to reach others was just after someone was converted, because that newly saved person still had the old network of social acquaintances. Unfortunately, churches demand so much from their newly-converted members, that all the old social contacts have disappeared within two years. And they have learnt to speak a totally different language: church-speak, and they look totally different (a good suit, no more long hair, etc). Why are we so surprised that we don't reach people?

In the case of brother Bijlstra it is obvious: friendship evangelism is a contradiction in terms. Being someone's friend requires years of input, through thick and thin. And it needs to be for the sake of true friendship and not in order to convert someone. Friendship is only possible if you really care about the other person and really want to be committed to them, irrespective of who that person is or what they believe.

Years ago, a friend of ours went through a very hard time. It was possible that his wife might die. He arrived at our door in the middle of the night, as we were the only people with whom he could share his sorrow. He did not come to be converted or prayed for. At that moment the friendship proved to be real, because we were allowed to comfort him by listening and share in his sadness. Does he know we are Christians? Yes, he does. Does he know what he really ought to do? Yes, he does. But what mattered in the friendship at that time was our attitudes and deeds, not our pious words. We are still friends with him and his wife.

Every leader should have a number of real friendships with non-Christians. There is nothing quite like it to get out of the monologue culture. That monologue culture makes one feel superior. We need real, true dialogue. There are immense riches in the encounter between people of different beliefs. It is enlightening to be trusted by those who don't share one's convictions.

Jesus was an example of this. He liked being in pubs, bars and other places where people gathered. The pious elite called him a 'party goer'. The prostitutes and debt collectors found Him to be a true friend.

26. Judgement

At the age of 15, Hanneke had been raped and she became pregnant. Great panic had led very quickly to an abortion from the doctor. A few weeks later Hanneke, in a very bewildered state, dared go outside again and went to her church. She had expected to find a listening ear in her pastor, but he judged her for having had an abortion, and made matters worse by enquiring if she had been provocatively dressed, which might have contributed to this happening to her? Hanneke never went to church again..

A tactless and foolish leader can do so much damage. Even though abortion isn't good, this leader should have understood that this girl panicked and could not see any other way out. He should have led her to the Lord, should have blessed her, and brought the foetus and all the questions before the Lord with love and compassion.

Abortion is not always reprehensible and a matter for judgement. Neither is euthanasia always inhumane. If people suffer dreadfully and receive much heavy medication, that medication hastens the end. We feel that it is more inhumane to prolong life if that drives people crazy with pain.

Are we in favour of abortion or euthanasia all of a sudden. No, of course not. But all the same, wise leaders learn to see nuances in different situations. It is so easy to judge people or situations from rigid 'ivory tower' viewpoints.

Jesus blamed the Pharisees for their lack of balance in terms of love, empathy and compassion. Let's never forget that mercy triumphs over judgement. Leadership needs to take this on board as something fundamental.

27. Blessing

Henk was a nice guy, but when he became a teenager, he became impossible to deal with. Soon things went from bad to worse: he got involved with drugs and crime. Henk's parents saw it coming but could not put the finger exactly on the problems, because everything was done 'in the dark'.

Henk's parents wore out their knees praying, cursed powers of darkness and almost cursed the boy himself in their prayers.

But nothing worked - the situation became untenable. Then God showed them clearly one evening that they needed to pray differently. 'If you should bless your enemies, how much more your own child'. Henk's parents found this difficult, but they started. At first it felt strange to bless someone in your living room and then place them in God's hands. But they persisted in their blessing and slowly things began to change: more openness in the household: the desperate stance of the parents changed, Henk's changed. Two years later Henk indicated that he wanted to break with his old life. Nowadays he is a pillar of support.

A similar situation happened to the author Jamie Buckingham. His daughter had been abused by a friend. The change came when he and his wife started to bless that young man who eventually became the best possible husband to their daughter.

Is our prayer a blessing or a curse? Leaders see a lot. All the things we come across can make us quite tired and uncharitable. We, too, have learnt a lot from similar incidents, and have then applied what we have learnt. With the same pleasing results. We discovered that we ourselves change in such a situation, that it is possible to pray for our enemies that things will go well with them. For that blessing brings them into God's presence. And He knows best how to handle them. We also found that beside people, we can also bless situations, things, even animals. Blessing is the quiet secret weapon of God's kingdom.

And let's be honest: have we, as leaders, always got the answers. Does anyone get all the answers with regard to their needs, other people's problems, or regarding business or social problems? Have you yourself got the answer to everything you come across? No, of course not. Let's admit it honestly and have the wisdom to ask for God's blessing on people when we pray.

28. Cutting ties

Ab and Janneke became very close friends. But then it seemed as if the blossoming love between them had stopped blossoming. They began to look sad.

In a personal talk, it all came out. Ab had had a girlfriend before and had slept with her. In due course that relationship broke up. Ab was very happy to have found someone whom he wanted to marry. But he didn't know what to do? Should he have married that other girl? The counsellor was a wise man. He explained that marrying out of obligation (without love) only led to divorce. And yes, if people were very much in love, things did sometimes get out of hand and led to intercourse. But just having sex does not make people into a married couple. You become true partners through commitment. That is what binds them together. That counsellor reassured the young man. What had happened was not sin, just very unwise behaviour. Together they prayed and soon God cut the ties that bound him to the ex-girlfriend. Completely renewed, Ab was able to continue building his relationship with Janneke. They have now been married for more than 20 years. It did not end in divorce, because there was nothing in this relationship that had the potential to undermine, rot or destroy it.

That leader that a wise man with much insight into human and spiritual relationships. Thanks to him, they have a healthy marriage and no-one is crippled through a guilt complex.

We came across quite a different situation when a girl from the youth group of a nearby church got pregnant. The minister there used the incident as an example. He forced the couple to confess their sin and guilt before the whole congregation. It will be obvious that this had negative results. It caused enormous division and conflict between all kinds of people.

The couple had long intended to get married. Either something happened too early or they had set the wedding date too late. Anyway, that church should have supported and helped these two people instead of coming down so hard on them.

That minister's attitude had a disastrous effect on young people: there was nothing they felt able to bring out in the open or dared talk about. They went underground, and several lovely youngsters changed into secretive, hypocritical, underhand people.

Our words and deeds have enormous influence. As leaders we are often quick to bind evil powers. In Ab and Janneke's situation it was wiser to break the ties.

May that help us, too, when we get stuck in business situations, for example. They can lead to court cases, but it is much better to try and resolve them so that all parties can continue in peace.

The same goes for divorce. Let's make it clear that we are not in favour of divorce. The following, which happened in a church known to us, showed much wisdom and compassion:

A couple had married in that church a few years earlier. But they did not get on. There were dreadful conflicts. They tried everything: counselling, prayer, therapy - nothing worked. In this particular instance they came to the conclusion after year of struggling, that at the end of the day we are called to peace.

So, in the company of just a few people, in the presence of witnesses, they eventually said to God that the whole thing was a failure and that there was no other option but to break the union. The rings were returned and as 'un-tied people' they went on their way after prayer. The divorce soon followed, with the agreement of the leaders.

Both people were well supported afterwards. Some years later both re-married. They are now in different churches and have wonderful families. And now, if they come across each other (occasionally at a conference) there is mutual understanding and respect.

We hope that people will not write us angry letters because they think we agree to any old point of view. We simply suggest this wise attitude for consideration. We, too, have found a number of similar situations. The examples helped us to bring about a wise reaction. Inflexibility can be completely counter-productive.

29. Homosexuality

Hans came from a broken home. His father had beaten his mother so often that their marriage had ended in divorce. Mother and the children were very poor, and Hans's youth was a difficult time. When he became a teenager, he discovered that he was 'different' from other boys in many respects. At home he dared not mention this. At school he could not mention it. He ended up struggling badly, which was all the worse because praying did not help. He did ask for prayer in the church, but he was deliberately vague about what the problem was. That did not help either. What was he to do?

In the end Hans found the courage to talk to the minister, because he was in such anguish. He was prayed for, but nothing changed. Powers were broken, but nothing changed. Reconciliation took place, but nothing changed. A time of fasting and praying, but nothing changed. Minister and elders began to get impatient, because he still had not 'changed'.

Was there any hidden sin? Did something hold him back? Was he unwilling? Surely the fault had to be his! Resentment and reprimands followed and still there was no change! The problem was definitely the way Hans believed, his submission to God and His will. They put pressure on Hans, he had to prove that he wanted to be all right. They found him a girlfriend and everyone was encouraged. It became a very painful affair! Eventually Hans was thrown out of the church, as he was 'disobedient to God'.

During the first few years of our ministry we did not come across homosexuality. We did notice, however, many pastors' extreme reactions to "homo"s turning up at their 'club'. We used to joke: "Normally a man would take a wife, is he now worried in case he is taken as a husband?"

Everything changed when one colleague turned out to be homosexual and came honestly to tell of his struggle. As there were a lot of myths about homosexuality, we wanted to take time to think about it all.

We would like to share our observations:

- Various reactions in men towards homosexuals turned out to be based on fear and personal insecurity.
- There appear to be two kinds of homosexuality. In the life of a child there seem to be two periods in which their sexuality is vulnerable and could be influenced by pressures, traumas and experiences.
- In adults, too, we found latent homosexuality which did not come to the surface until the age of around 40. (There were many reasons/causes why it did not come to light earlier).
- Not everything can be classed as homosexuality, eg trans-sexuality, or babies who are girls on the outside and boys on the inside.
 - All these considerations show that we really live in a broken world. These kinds of abnormalities need to be approached completely differently to homosexuality. Also, these abnormalities are not a sin!

- People too easily think that all homosexuals are messing around and are a source of social evil.
- There was great diversity in how homosexuals handled their inclination:
 - A. They accept their inclination but don't act on it. People opt for a kind of celibacy and find peace in that status quo.
 - B. People develop a permanent relationship with one person.
 - C. People limit their life to a number of longer term relationships, comparable to re-marrying after divorce.
 - D. People go wild, and enter into all kinds of changing contacts, messing around and acting perversely.
- With this analysis we went and studied the Bible thoroughly. We tried to do this as objectively as possible. What were our findings?
 - The cultural context in which the Old Testament calls homosexuality a grave sin, was primarily concerned with all kinds of perversities, sacrificial rites, idol worship, extreme orgies. It is obvious that these are sins.(situation D)
 - Where reference is made to Sodom and Gomorra, the city apparently was not condemned for sodomy but for the dreadful carriage of social injustice.
 - The Bible is complete silent on situations A., B. and C. above; so great care needs to be taken in viewing those situations.
- Are we making excuses all of a sudden? No, but it is clear to us that cases A., B. and C. these people can safely be left to God's grace. We know quite a few people in any of these three situations who have an obvious relationship with God. So why are they still homosexual? If a person has no foot, it does not just grow back. We as Christians need to accept that person as they are: footless. And the sin of homosexuality? The sins of some heterosexuals are just as great, if they get involved with all kinds of partners.
- Nobody is perfect. Everyone has some shortcoming or other: a physical defect, a traumatic experience, problems in the family, etc. But does that stop us from being a part of Christ's body? The Lord came because we are imperfect. He came for the broken, the weak, etc. For those people especially, including homosexuals, there needs to be room in the church. For them, too, the church needs to be a safe haven of love and acceptance.
- There are homosexuals who become heterosexual - in our opinion that was the result of corrective conditioning behaviour (eg boys in prostitution).
- The best we can do is accept these people (as we do with other people) for who they are, and love them and bless them. Whatever our motives, we should not write them off, judge them or try to change them.

We hope that the reader will respect our opinion. We have learnt during our 30 years of 'ministry' that very complex situations cannot be resolved with simple solutions or standard answers.

We realise that we make ourselves open to criticism in this chapter. People do not need to agree with us, but we do ask for a prayerful attitude when people consider our analysis and our reasoning. We want to be judged on mercy and compassion.

30. Criticism

Kees was a real Dutchman - honest and outspoken! He was a pillar in the local church. After a few years he became an elder. Everything was going fine until a new minister arrived straight from bible college. He was not used to the open and candid way Kees dealt with situations. While Kees was only talking about matters or situations, the minister took everything personally, and gradually the conflicts worsened. In the end, Kees stood down and left for a different church, thus depriving them of a strong pillar.

Criticism is too hard to deal with and often we take it too personally. However, criticism is needed to help us see ourselves and situations clearly. In order to make positive use of criticism, the following analysis should be helpful:

1. All people have certain qualities as well as weaknesses. Each person differs in their strengths and weaknesses. This makes society very interesting: we learn to complement each other.
2. Some have more talent for creativity and taking on positions of leadership than others. That does not make them a 'superperson', at most it gives them more responsibility.
3. Some have more technical abilities than others, making them a better speaker, presenter, dancer, musician or painter. That doesn't mean such people are more "gifted" or "anointed".
4. Some are more inclined to stick to certain 'rules', while others apply more freedom and experimentation. Paul says that some eat meat and others don't. Both need to accept rather than condemn each other.
5. One person is better able to get things done than another (who might be a day-dreamer). Yet, however important zeal is, it needs to be related to vision, ideals, dreams and creativity.

Another observation is that at a certain moment Christians could create problems which might upset the balance of points 1. to 5. A few examples:

- A. Believers hide behind their faith. This makes faith as the inspiring power more like a wet blanket that extinguishes life, adventure and the experiment. This makes zombies out of sparkling people and living testimonies.
- B. Believers can become excessively strict on certain matters, so that rules of behaviour are laid down: eg 'Christians don't dance', 'Christians do not go to the cinema', 'Christians do not engage themselves in visual arts', 'Christians do not(and so on)' A person can apply such rules to himself but cannot impose them on others!
- C. Some pious utterances compromise the renewing wind of God's Spirit. When people start saying 'God told me that.....' or 'The Spirit revealed to me that.....', it only too often is used to avoid every criticism in terms of improvement, openness of leadership, and accountability. It leaves no room for verbal response. That type of utterance blocks creativity, imagination, openness, renewal and criticism.

It is important, therefore, to beware of false interpretations of the faith and the unnecessary burdens which some people try to pile on to us. If we are free, there should be room to experiment with our gifts, to develop them, to communicate in varying ways (or not) and to deal positively with criticism.

Criticism is necessary for growth and improvement. We should not hide our weaknesses and faults, but address them in the light of honest criticism. And that applies to all aspects mentioned in points 1. to 5 above. The creative process, the leadership process and the maturing process all require blood, sweat and tears. This can be very uncomfortable but it means we are alive: intensely, completely and with a healthy dose of perspective and self-criticism.

Is criticism a problem? Yes, it can be if we are emotionally too involved. We can take everything to heart. A healthy outlook is to realise that we can be targeted by others the moment we step into the public eye. So be prepared for pain, narrow-mindedness and faulty reasoning.

We also need to take into account the person delivering the criticism. Some criticise from a completely negative, destructive state of mind or attitude to life. It will be obvious that this kind of criticism is not constructive. Criticism should be offered from a constructive viewpoint. It also requires the ability to reason! There is a definite difference between saying, "That was awful" and "I'm sure you could improve on that". The words used and the tone in which they are said can make a crucial difference. Criticism without love and without empathy leads to nothing.

So be prepared for the strongest criticism and before you react: sleep on it for a night.

Another piece of wise advice: Filter criticism. Take the essence from it and don't react to irrelevant side issues, procedural matters, etc.

If you are offering criticism: Question where you are coming from in terms of state of mind and point of view. Words can wound deeper than bullets. And if you are receiving criticism: how can it help you to improve? Be honest with yourself and use that honesty as a step towards greater maturity. It will result in a stronger identity rather than a threat.

31. The 'eleventh commandment'

Read again in chapter 2. about Leen's teenage years. He broke the eleventh commandment: *'Thou shalt not ask leaders any questions'*. It did not turn Leen into a rebellious youngster but he did become a radical elder. As we look around us, not much appears to have changed. The moment youngsters begin to ask real questions they are silenced. Those same leaders moan afterwards about the lack of interest in the youngsters who don't seem to want to join in anything. Or the youngsters really do become rebellious. Surprised?

Leaders dream of winning battles; they talk of victories, but how will they achieve them?

Let's read the story of Gideon: he was rebellious and recalcitrant. And who were the 500 he chose? The rebels, the rough customers. That kind of youngsters are often the gold among us. If they receive good guidance, they become the ones who change the world. Revolutionaries are not cautious, agreeable puppets on a string who are ready to do whatever they are asked.

We as leaders need to learn how to handle that type of youngster. We welcome them in our movement: they are future leaders! Is it easy? Are they easy? No! Which makes it so important and interesting. It is a challenge to lead this kind of youngster and to mould them and not lose them. How do we do that?

- First we must change our attitude! Every question matters. Even if we don't know the answer. Don't ridicule that. They should be able to talk about any thing.
- Take youngsters, their life and their problems seriously. Treat them as adults.
- Be honest if you don't know the answer. We are leaders, we are not God, we don't know everything, nor do we need to.
- Be open to comment and criticism.
- Have a great sense of humour.
- Don't be a pope. 'Ex cathedra' is the end of every dialogue.
- Don't give the impression as if you have God in your pocket: "God said this", "God showed me that", etc. Discard the slogans.
- Relax, behave normally, be yourself.
- Be bold: be adventurous!

32. The closed door

Some years ago, the Continentals sang the song 'When God closes a door, He opens a window' - a song from the musical "Dreamer" about Joseph.

There are many reasons why sometimes roads in our lives get closed. Such an occurrence can be very far-reaching, even traumatic. Everything that was clear and right could suddenly disappear. What then? What should we do?

In the story of Joseph that happened several times. He was kidnapped, betrayed by his family, sold and imprisoned. How would we feel in that situation: if we were treated totally unjustly? How would we have dealt with it? It is said that Joseph was a prototype of Jesus. But that does not mean that he did not face some awful situations.

Such things happen daily and we ourselves also face situations of injustice and other problems. What matters then is how we view each situation. Joseph could have been completely destroyed by it all. But, after the despair and doubt, he viewed the closed doors as a challenge for new possibilities. We need to ask ourselves: how would we have handled these circumstances. The point of view we take makes all the difference to how we react to our problems. Does that change each situation? No! But it does change our own attitude. And then that closed door leads us to a path of new possibilities. If we had not changed our point of view, we would not have seen that open window or that other path. Leadership is helping people not to focus on the closed doors but on the open windows.

Three times our organisation nearly went bankrupt: in '76, in '83 and in '93. Those were hard times. When all seemed lost, there was an open window which became the beginning of renewal. It generated new creativity. And that proved to be our reason to exist. Pruning can be painful, but the end result is more fruit.

33. Differences

We (Ria and Leen) fell in love because we were so different. There was a real sparkle between us. But when we began our married life together in a flat, those differences became a curse! When two strong personalities are put together in one box, they start to bite and fight. After a year those difference got bigger and bigger. We tried to adjust, to find common ground. But all that planing and polishing did not help. Cracks began to appear. The differences were such unbridgeable conflicts, that in the third year of our marriage we decided to divorce. After the worst fight ever, we were both crying in our beds. For the first time we were honest enough not to blame each other but to whisper to God: "I can't do it, I can't handle this". That honesty became the beginning of a change. Did we become different people? No, we learnt to accept each other and not to try to change each other. We learnt to compromise. A year later we were back where we started: we loved each other because we were so different. At an evangelistic broadcast years later, we told of how we were once heading for a divorce. That shocked quite a lot of people! We can wholeheartedly say that we've stayed different and that we cope with those differences by accepting and dealing with those differences. In fact, we complement each other perfectly! We had also needed to learn to find the right points of contact and communication.

Isn't leadership about finding a way of making different parts work together as whole? A movement, a congregation, a church is no more than a workplace where all the different parts can shine separately and still form a working whole: unity in diversity. That is the secret of the 'body of the Lord'. The last thing we need is to become each other's clones.

We can often observe how people imitate their leader or pastor and often such a leader even feels flattered! How foolish!

34. Tolerance

Ria was speaking 'somewhere' at a women's meeting. Her speech provoked some interesting reactions. Afterwards one lady came up to Ria.

"Yes, she was pleased about the remarks about being open with respect to our children. She was trying that. But now her son had moved in with his girlfriend. She could not talk about it with anyone in the church. People were so quick to speak of shame. She really was bothered. And if he was living with someone, was he still saved?"

Ria asked, "Is she nice? Is she nice to your son?" The woman had not expected that question! "Eh, yes, she is a lovely girl", was the answer. Ria beamed, "So what's stopping you from loving this young woman, learning to appreciate her, to embrace her, bless her, so that your son and this young woman will be happy?"

"But", said the lady, "isn't it wrong to be living together? I don't know how to handle it." Ria said, "There's not much in life that happens according to our rule book. Many Christians come unstuck there. We need to learn to see situations as the Lord sees them. He saw a royal person in the woman who had committed adultery. He saw a king's son in a thief. What do we see in people? Even though there are things you don't agree with, these should not hinder love, mercy, compassion and solidarity. By practising these things we show who the Lord is and what He wants. Fortunately we can safely leave the judging to God."

The woman said, "So I can have normal contact with her and my son can keep coming home, and..." Much relieved, she went away.

Of course, leadership requires us to observe principles. Leadership all the more demands that we should emphasise the fundamental values of the Gospel: love tolerance and compassion. Good leadership will help to accept the other as it is.

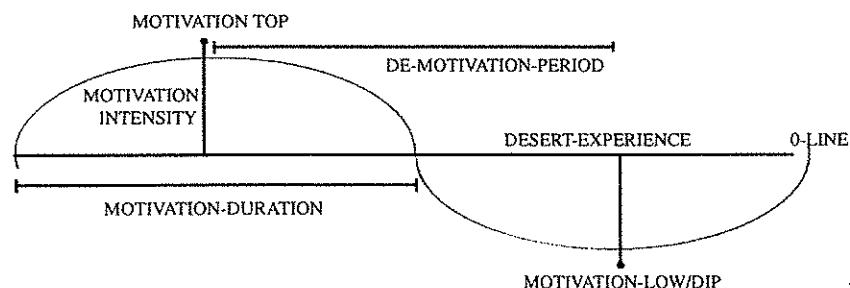
Do Ria and Leen approve of everything? What Leen and Ria encourage above all is the praying for, and the blessing of, another (whether a believer or not), in their own life and that they should be left in the hands of the Lord of heaven and earth. We should ask that God's spirit may work in their lives and their ambitions. That removes all hindering limitations and brings freedom.

35. Motivation

One of the biggest problems for those in leadership is motivation and de-motivation. When we look back on the early years of our movement, we thought that 'people experienced maximum motivation, if there was a good bible study, or a long prayer meeting.' Nothing proved to be less true! How come? Studying the motivation process, reading about it and applying what we found, resulted us the following:

Motivation curve

There is a motivation curve.



One can see that there is a motivation duration. Note: this is of short duration for most people. Only a few have a longer lasting motivation. There also is a motivation strength. Note: it is weak in most people. Only a few have a strong motivation. Then there is a motivation cycle: Something begins with enthusiasm, reaches a climax, disappointments follow and the de-motivation process starts. Eventually the motivation reaches nil and you fall into a hole.

The stronger and longer-lasting the motivation, the deeper and longer the hole. It could even turn into a complete wilderness experience. Such a period does cause people to grow stronger, to grow deep roots. When disappointments and de-motivations also become part of the total process, they in turn generate energy for a new motivation and a new growth. Good leadership knows this curve and prepares people for de-motivation and teaches them to understand the wilderness period.

A few remarks about the duration. Some things were noticeable:

- Young employees (18-24 years old) motivation duration: maximum 2 years, then they start looking for a different job.
- Volunteers in church work organisations: motivation duration: on average 3 months. (So it makes sense to take people on for a limited period of time. This prevents burnout.)
- Members or choirs, bands (these have a longer motivation duration: around 9 months per year): after 5 years a problem phase arrives (partly also concerned with leadership and maturity).

- Leadership of congregations/churches (elders, house group leaders): after 5 to 7 years a problems stage (also concerned with leadership and maturity).

Burnout and extinguishing

If maximum input is required for a longer period of time (ie longer than the duration of their motivation), this results in tired and completely worn out people who can't or won't do anything else. Leadership means recognising everyone's differing motivations and handling them wisely.

Leadership and motivation

How we lead will significantly motivate or de-motivate people. Influencing factors are:

1. Our conviction
2. Our enthusiasm.
3. Our own input.
4. How we support others in their task and needs (facilitating leadership).
5. Human resources management: acknowledging of gifts, people strengths and weaknesses. Do we know how to maximise on them?
6. Recognising periods. This is a fairly complicated process. Very important is: where leaders need to give leadership differently at a certain moment.

It will be obvious that a pioneer phase needs a leader who commands his army like some kind of general. But when that army goes to battle, the soldiers acquire abilities, and gain knowledge. Corporals and captains develop. Maturity takes about 5 - 7 years. If the general continues to 'command' his troops in this manner, increasing conflict with the subordinate carriers of responsibility will occur: the corporals and captains want to be heard. If they are not heard, such conflict will result that groups will divide, people will leave and much damage is done. This could have been prevented. When a leader sees that his people are becoming 'mature', the leadership will need changing. The pioneering phase is past and it is time for consolidation. The 'power' now rests with the upper layer (of corporals, captains and the general). Democratic structures need to be put in place. Teach these people how to govern.

A consolidation phase of 3 years is very healthy. Scrutinise everything: what has meaning and what hasn't. Is the correct person in the correct place everywhere? Can talents be developed?

The pioneering leader is at this time at most the 'primus inter pares' (first among equals). After such a consolidation a new closeness develops, a new motivation grows, new vitality occurs and a new movement is born. Who then gives leadership and how is a matter for democratic discussion. It could possibly, but not necessarily, be the old general.

This takes us to the recognition of everyone's type of motivation. There really should be a spectrum analysis for all the different strengths of motivation.

0 _____ max.

| | |
|---|---|
| Just for pleasure leisure/hobby | the 'holy calling' strong enough to move mountains even that is stone by stone |
| fast 'tiring of it all' of (very) short duration | enables 'top performance' for long(er) duration |
| most people amateurs (even with an artistic education, remain amateurs) | few people professionals (eg those who continue artistically, it's their 'calling', even if it does not earn a living. |

Then the next phase of the analysis:

- A. Self analysis - Where do you rate yourself (and others) on the above scale of 0 to 100?
- B. Goal analysis - What do you (and others) want to achieve?
- C. Possibilities analysis - What possibilities and (trained) talents have you got? What professional knowledge? Rate others, too.

Realisation

These three together determine the duration and completion of the project, or the goals set. If they don't coincide, adjust your goals and don't over-burden people or set unrealistic expectations (eg we will reach the whole world). That kind of disappointments are better avoided right from the start.

What is definitely a 'no no' is the manipulation of people in order to achieve those goals. Phrases like "God tells me that you all need to come and evangelise this Saturday" are totally unacceptable. Don't manipulate, just encourage everyone to use their gifts.

Sources of motivation

There appear to be various sources from which people can draw motivation. It is good to know what they are and to employ them at the right time in the right manner.

Firstly, the **wrong** sources:

- Manipulation. This can definitely motivate people. But it is a negative energy and it evaporates after a while. People who are manipulated often get seriously harmed so that ultimately nothing is achieved. People can even lose their faith and their trust in all people. (Only good counselling can help then.)
- Looking for profit. For example, "I want to get as rich as" Even in the Christian sector people are motivated by money instead of by a desire to serve. Greed for money is a motivation source of negative energy. That type of person

creates enormous stumbling blocks and will walk all over others.

- Fame. Eg, "I want to be as famous as Amy Grant or Billy Graham". So long as we look at, and compare ourselves to, others, we will develop negatively (you will never be Amy Grant or Billy Graham). Competition is a negative energy. We should not be motivated by competitiveness but by a desire to build something.
- Fear. Example, "If you don't practise now, Dad will be very angry!" If you don't do this, or that, God will be angry. There is no blessing because you, and so on. Fear can motivate for a while, but not for very long.

What are the **positive** sources?

- Being (or being made) aware of one's own abilities and talents. That will form a strong fundamental motivation.
- Understanding God's will. He deliberately gives us talents, gifts and abilities. He wants us to develop and use them.
- God has a unique plan for my life. I have a unique purpose. There is a goal for my life.
- Evaluation. It is very motivating to regularly assess and evaluate the process, the project: Look, we've already got this far! We are well under way and can correct any mistakes.
- Meditation and prayer. God can empower and motivate us through his Word and Spirit.
- Sharing/experiencing. Sharing something together is very motivating. It can vary from a struggle to survive to an evening of praise.
- Clarity of meaning and ideal gives purpose. The "idea" is the greatest motivator.
- Reward is a good motivator. This could be money, every worker should be reasonably paid. But it could also be appreciation, telling the person or the group that you appreciate their effort (much more profitable than reporting what has been done wrong).
- Celebrating achieved goals. The beginning of something is a very special moment - the ending should be equally special.
- And last but not least: leadership has an enormous influence!

To finish: let's not forget that working together toward a common goal is a very noble, educational and purifying process. It is a path of stumbling and getting up again, of obstacles and progress.

36. The way we say things

Jan was a keen young man. He consciously wanted to commit himself. So the youth leader let Jan do various things. But, keen people make mistakes, too. The youth leader had to correct Jan. But did that youth leader know how to go about that? No, he didn't. The youth leader kept informing Jan of all he did wrong. It won't surprise anyone to hear that within a year Jan could not be persuaded to do anything. And the youth leader just couldn't understand why Jan was so de-motivated. Even "deep" bible studies and "serious" talks were unable to motivate Jan (and others).

Here we see an elementary form of leadership. A well-known French expression is "C'est le ton qui fait la musique", meaning 'What you say is affected by how you say it' (literally: "It's the tone that makes the music").

In this chapter we want to plead for everyone in a position of leadership to learn the fundamental basics of communication. A leader who says, "You must listen to me because I am the leader (or 'God's anointed' or the like)" has lost before he begins. Those are not acceptable arguments. Leadership is proven through the manner in which the leadership is given.

Leadership is proven through people following ideas and direction. That leadership stems from a strong balanced inner man and is not dependent on the function of being a leader. So many people assume that what they say should be adhered to simply because they are the youth leader, or the pastor, or the president of something, or the leader of something else. What we are pleading for here, is the development of a leader's "inner man".

Elijah, Elisha and Gehazi were prophets. Elisha succeeded Elijah, because his inner man was in order. Gehazi could not succeed Elisha, because he craved for the status of leader rather than the inner man, for which he paid a hefty price, eventually. Gehazi lied and was corrupted; Elijah and Elisha weren't. The development of a leader's inner man is therefore good for society, too. It helps him to resist temptation.

Back to "C'est le ton qui fait la musique". Communication experts suggest the following ground rules:

- A. Tell people first what went well (in terms of set up, preparations, plan, etc).
- B. Then tell them what could be better (which is a thousand times more positive than telling them what went wrong).
- C. Tell them how it should be done. Specific instructions rather than vague comments like 'the Lord will show you' or 'you'll see'!

Such clear and specific feedback is very helpful, and motivates and inspires everyone to consider everything properly.

37. The 'terrible' teens

In our work we come in contact with around 500 teenagers each year who are being trained and eventually go on a musical mission tour as a young Continental or Disciple. They are trained professionally for 8 days before they go on tour. We talk with many of them.

These conversations are naturally frank and strictly confidential. Many questions are fired at us. We also observe a lot. There are a few observations regarding teenagers:

- They can easily see-saw between all kinds of moods and emotions.
- As their hormones affect their chemistry, we see them go from being extrovert through to an introverted period. The best approach is to let them go through this in peace and definitely not to ask questions like 'how are things going now?'
- Clothing, and outward appearance are suddenly very important. It is an expensive phase!
- How should they handle their sexuality? Masturbation is not a sin. It's all part of being a teenager. Don't judge them.
- There will times of extreme behaviour; be patient.
- Whatever happens, don't judge them - try to support them through this period.
- Don't break their trust, they are very vulnerable. Especially if something about them becomes public.
- They try things out, they experiment. That does not necessarily end in disaster. Don't focus on what they do, but on why they do it.
- Pay attention to basic norms and values - not clothing, appearance or hair colour.
- Don't reject them, have an open heart and an open mind.
- Learn to see things in perspective and have a sense of humour.

As a teenager Leen once asked the leaders their opinion on masturbation. Their answers could fill a book with contrary and untrue responses. Such an experience is no encouragement to talk about such things. Ultimately one would struggle through alone (with every chance of developing a large guilt complex).

Is it so hard to be a teenager these days? Yes, it is!

- They have to make choice with regard to their education at a very early age.
- There is a chronic shortage of time (not because of TV but because of the many activities and the pressure of studies).
- Many people expect adult behaviour from teenagers, but they are still only teenagers. This results in conflict.
- Teenagers mature physically at an increasingly early age. About a hundred years ago they matured when they were about eighteen years old, after which they got married. These days they start from the age of twelve and they nor-

mally don't get married until at least fourteen years later. This is a difficult situation that can result in stress, teenage sex, unwanted pregnancies, moral dilemmas, and so on. The question is: how much discipline can reasonably be expected from a teenager? Especially discipline which, a hundred years ago, was not expected from people until they were twenty years old. There are no easy answers, but we are sure that one of the solutions lies in forming good friendships. Another solution could be found in adults who are willing to discuss things openly, thus creating an environment that is free from moral judgement.

38. *The 'roaring' twenties*

Several other couples from our youth group got married around the same time as we did. While we tried to sort out our conflicts, we noticed to our amazement how quickly the others turned into old married couples.

The lively, young, sparkling, exciting, and challenging outlook had disappeared within 3 years. They were settled, neatly dressed in a suit or a dress, and had become typical average couples.

Where was the guidance to keep this life exciting? By the time we had come through our crisis, we were still young, creative, with an appetite for life. The marriage that threatened to destroy us at first, became a source of dynamic power, which is what happens when a minus is added to a plus. Living with our differences gave us a very distinctive advantage which could even be seen from the way we had furnished our house. We went to the cinema and to concerts. We read different things, liked different TV programmes - in short: life was exciting! Sexually, it was creative ground, too. A lot of options beside the 'missionary position'. We felt great. Life was worth the living. The roaring twenties were one big exciting dynamic experiment.

We have seen singles go downhill, too. And yet there was no leadership or insight to stop the feeling of isolation. A single person can be, and stay, creative and develop a meaningful life. How to handle sexuality as a single person is another problem altogether, for although you are on your own, your body still has needs. By the way, it is remarkable how few 'couples' dare develop friendships with single people.

Leadership needs to encourage people to realise that it is worth 'stepping out of the boat'. Leadership can challenge people to lead a meaningful and creative life, which is different to an endless chain of prayer meetings, choir practices and bible studies. Not that we should take unwise risks, but there is no harm in trying to avoid dullness in our personal-, family- and church life. If we succeed, we are a living testimony to God's creativity.

39. The “boring” thirties

Whatever we do to keep the freshness, boredom hits somewhere during one’s thirties. Work becomes ever more demanding. The children take up all our spare time. From every side one’s energy is drained by activities and obligations and before long partners have become strangers. How often do you talk with your wife? When do you see your husband? You become islands in the same house: you drift apart.

That happened to us. It brought about a severe crisis. Not because we were so different, but because we had stopped communicating. So, one day we disconnected the telephone and took the children to their grandparents. We had a cuddle and very deliberately started talking: about what was on our minds, about our concerns, our dreams. It was a deeply precious time. We made some important decisions about how many evenings per week we would be at home for each other and for the children, and that either Saturday or Sunday would be for the family. We consciously started to invest time to make life interesting again. And as we had both long realised that our partner was not the ideal person or had that ideal figure, we started doing things together or for each other in order to make ourselves “interesting” again (to win each other back and find each other again). It brought a fresh vitality to our lives.

We have seen colleagues hide this boredom very easily behind pious jargon or talking shop: ‘for the Lord I have to.....’, ‘God is calling me to’, ‘These people need me to’, and so on. Many plausible sounding reasons can be found as to why we should not acknowledge the boredom at home. If you want to grow into a really deep friendship, you have to agree specific actions and carry them out, in order to grow closer than ever before. Leadership is creatively applying oneself to a commitment.

And as for the single people: If you have been waiting for the knight on his white charger: well he won’t come! So throw yourself into the battle, go a-hunting, go to different conferences, weeks, weekends. Dare to look outside your own neck of the woods. Change your job, go travelling, take a risk, but do something. Leadership means looking out for single people in their thirties and stimulating them to new challenges.

40. Hooray - “mid-life” crisis!

And then come the forties. You thought you had it all worked out and suddenly a new crisis hits totally unexpectedly because of changes to your hormonal balances. There are those who bluntly deny this: they are so close to God, what could happen to them? They are so sure of themselves, there could not be any weaknesses.

Be prepared for this crisis, because it arrives most unexpectedly. Of course there have always been personal differences between you, and yet you’ve coped. But suddenly you find yourself dreaming of a different wife or husband, or even deeply longing for another partner. And that can be quite confusing if you wake up on a Sunday morning and have to preach. It gets even more difficult if you cannot talk about it with your partner.

The funny thing is that you really love your partner, so what is going on? Are you going mad? Does your partner ever have these thoughts? Is the devil trying to break you apart? If your faith is wearing out? Praying, being prayed for, you name it: nothing helps! The hormonal changes are rife in your body. You discover that you could easily fall in love with someone else. You find that you would like to run away. You want to start a new business. You want another challenge. What on earth can you do?

We have seen all this happen in our own lives and in the lives of others. So how did we deal with it?

- We talked a lot and didn’t keep any secrets from each other. However shocking it was, we told each other. We now look back with a wry smile to those crazy days.
- We realised that all those thoughts, dreams, longings in themselves were not sinful, because we understood where they came from. Giving in to them, that would be sinful and would destroy our whole lives in the process. So we kept those doors tightly closed. We also decided to do everything we could to avoid situations that might generate a real temptation. So, no more travelling alone, no more drinking alone in a bar. Also, no more going visiting on our own, etc, etc. We saved ourselves much pain and trouble by being a bit more alert.
- Leaders and acquaintances who did give in, were tearing their hair out after a while. If only they had stayed with their faithful Mary. Now they lived in a different house, with a different wife with another baby; help, life was choking them even more.
- So continue to invest time in one another. Or do something outrageous, something completely unexpected. We are fairly conservative, but we went to a sauna all the same and we even went to dancing lessons.

That mid-life crisis also has other implications:

- The children leave home. We have to learn to live with that. And if your partner was a caring mother, what are the possibilities now for her to have a fulfilling existence. Help her with that.

- Both the husband and the wife could get very low or even burnt out. At that time, life is bleak and nothing has meaning. Ria experienced this and it took years to get over it. This required a lot of patience from Leen.

Leadership requires us to recognise this phase and navigate our way through it wisely, and to help others to do the same.

41. *Relaxed and “over the hill”*

And then come the fifties. A new peace descends on you. With nothing to prove and your hormones at rest, the ‘change’ a thing of the past. Now there’s time for new depths and new heights.

Love deepens to a strong friendship. As re-born partners you can face life. You work on new sparks and sparks can still be flying.

It’s a period in which enjoying and doing new things give a new charm to our existence. There are still so many more things that carry a creative challenge. The first grandchildren are quite an experience. We can now stand back from a lot of things. There is a new peace, a new strength and a new growth.

A new phase of leadership begins in which we may encourage and stimulate younger ones. We have passed the age of competition and have entered a period where we need to consider the next generation. Our own responsibilities can decrease as those of the younger ones increase. Why do all the work yourself? It could end in a heart attack!

A wise leader will delegate the work to others. Their wisdom and insight become important because of their experience, and not because of their ability with hammer and saw.

42. *our sixties and seventies*

This overlaps the years 2005-2019 of our organizations. The growth of all activities continued. Especially the number of our trained Continentals increased till 15 groups on the road annually in 2008. That gave problems to find enough training facilities. So we decide to enlarge the Continental Art Centre (our offices). First on the left side of the original building storage, office space and 2 apartments. Later on the right side a theatre hall, foyer, dressing rooms, etc. There was a grand opening on October 5 2005 by prime minister Jan Peter Balkenende. And for many years we could train and send out in ministry many groups. That was so great, intense and blessed. But even for Leen there is a limit of what you can do timewise and stresswise...

Leen was near a burnt-out in 2007. We thought to have found an assistant. Successor may be. The first months it was a great help. But during that year it became more and more clear that this person was not able to handle our very complex organization. So after that year we had to say goodbye to this person. But several wrong decisions had unfortunately a long lasting effect. Leen had gained just enough energy to provide leadership to down-size the organization.

First we saw 2007/2008 as a failure. Later on we understood the lessons. We should have scouted, trained, selected, trained so much better. We should have found the right person who would have been able to carry the incredible load of responsibilities. Much later we saw another lesson after much more prayer... a successor would never come. The unique call and mission was only given to Leen (and Ria) and nobody else: these pioneers would never have successors. Would all what had been achieved be in vain? Absolutely not. The testimonies of all those youngsters being trained and going on mission around Europe speak loud and clear and for many years. Till today we see ex-Continentals and ex-Christian Artists participants doing great things, having responsible positions, building churches, active in social work, active in cultural organizations, being of great importance in the arts. Even active in the political arena and the trade unions.

Looking back in 2016 Leen started to write down the real chair moments of the history of the organization and our personal history. What were the real impact insights? These papers were worked out as the basis of the Masterclass Cultural Leadership, our real legacy.

What about us as persons? Well: our bodies are wearing off. So pills and injections come. First it is irritating, but we started to embrace these situations, so you have peace with all changes. So many elderly complain about health, we decided never to complain and take things as they are: so you face the future in a positive mood.

And unfortunately, sex gets less. But other beautiful experiences come in place. More and more Ria and Leen discovered how much they are entangled in doing and thinking. En that gives a lot of funny and interesting talks. To be comrade is another interesting experience and precious. And we learn more and more to enjoy the beautiful moments of the day. We enjoy our mature sons, their wives and our grandchildren. All very special and unique persons

A great period was Ria's shop in fashion and art. She asked herself in 2006 what new things life could bring her. (She has always been head of the financial department). Her gifts are styling and fashion. So after some consideration she started a shop in fashion, art and brocante at the Pijnackerplein in Rotterdam-city. That was for years a great experience. Ria can write a book what happened there those years. Unfortunately the economic crises made this project impossible. In 2014 she had to close her shop. But the contacts in that neighbourhood remain till today.

2014: a strange year. We could not do a Christian Artists Seminar as we had a problem with the EU about their financial support. As result Leen had more time and used that to be key speaker at several conferences and christian festivals

around Europe. Our Artists Trade Union merged with another CNV trade union. For members an improvement in service especially in legal matters. This was the first large outsourcing of activities. A very sad situation was the bankruptcy of The Continentals-Netherlands. Leen and Ria (being overseers) had warned this section of their Continental Ministries organization that things were going wrong. But the executive director refused to change direction. Mismanagement was the end of this section. And that did great harm to the trust of so many young people and parents had in this organization. For Leen and Ria too a great disappointment. Leen and Ria had as well a big financial loss (part of their retirement was lost as it was invested in Continentals.nl). The most stupid part was that several ex-continentals blamed Leen and Ria for this bankruptcy... Leen and Ria were only responsible for the European strategy of all Continental ministries and had no responsibility for the daily business of Continentals.NL at all....

As said a process of downsizing and outsourcing started already in 2008. And that worked out very well.

At retirement in 2015 we had no personnel on the payroll. From 25 full time paid staff to zero, was a good move.

They were all housed in the Continental Art Centre, and we could close down all Continental Art Centre operations in 2015

So since 2015 we concentrate on: what are our key values, what is the central focus of our call and ministry. This has been worked out in the content of the Masterclass Cultural Leadership. We do coaching of persons and of several organizations. We oversee our many bookpublications and studies. We advice on difficult issues as copyrights and other legal matters in the arts. We write case studies. We discovered that our disappointments are interesting sources for learning. We do speaking engagements. Looking back we can say that our life and ministry has contributed to blessing, beauty, new developments for so many around Europe. So we can be thankful

2019: We are now in our 70-ties. We remain to be pioneers, we stimulate new young talents. And we enjoy so much our children and grandchildren...

Epilogue

Our experiences as leaders end here. Of course we could have included chapters about those in their sixties and seventies, but we deliberately did not want to write about them, as we wanted to draw from our own resources.

Of course we could write further chapters: What if others are jealous of you, or gossip about you, or want to destroy you, or want to cause you to stumble, or want to compromise you, or lie about you, or

But if we wrote about those things, it would be quite a different book. We did not do that because the book of Proverbs (OT) gives a good many sensible instructions about how to handle those. In fact, the New Testament also has a few things to say about them.

We wanted to write THIS book about matters we ourselves can handle, decisions we ourselves can take, things we ourselves can achieve.

Are we perfect people and the perfect leaders? Not at all! We have honestly talked about our mistakes, too. We hope the our experiences will encourage many a budding leader. We have made ourselves vulnerable by honestly writing about our experiences and opinions. It is wonderful to lead something, but also very difficult. A price needs to be paid, as it changes one's whole life. Besides, your leadership affects the lives of others. We need to ask ourselves again and again: what is the effect? What will work? Little things can sometimes have big consequences. Anyway, a lot of mistakes can be avoided - that is the point of this book.

In time we hope to write a sequel.

May this book provoke you to good leadership.

Leen and Ria La Rivière

PS If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer (a leader) he desires a noble task.

1 Tim 3:1-13:

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited, and fall under the same judgement as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers, but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

If you wish to respond to any of the issues we have raised, or require information, speaking engagements, special courses etc., please contact us:

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Leen wrote 28 books in dutch

Several have been translated in a number of languages. English books:

- Creative and Christian
- Music & Ministry
- Praise and Worshippers
- The Message
- Creative Leadership
- Lessons, leaders & Life (together with Ria)
- Evangelistic concerts
- Up to date
- Music & revivals
- the creative church
- Pas de deux
- the Art of life
- Behind the scenes
- On the way

Special recognition: On october 11, 1999 the Queen of the Netherlands **knighted** Leen La Rivière for all his life long contributions to the world of the arts and culture. A very special honour.

In november 2014 Leen got the **Life Time Achievement Award** from the Christian Music and media Industry of the Netherlands

Ria wrote 9 books in dutch

Several have been translated in English:

- snippets
- Bits and pieces
- Quacks
- Stolen Innocence

Special recognition: On April 30, 2003 Ria became **Lady** by the Queen in the Order of Oranje-Nassau because of her life time contributions in the social and culture sector of the Netherlands

SUPPLEMENT

Based on a good number of responses and questions we decided to add a few chapters to the original version of Lessons, Leaders and Life.

These chapters come from the book THE MESSAGE (Leen La Rivière) an in depth study of the teachings of Jesus you can find in his story-tellings. There are very important consequences for JUSTICE (for the community, the family, the church and as public justice), and for STEWARDSHIP.

In this supplement as well a chapter about the position of women. After reading we suggest you read again chapter 29 about homosexuality. All the brothers and sisters from the lgbt community belong as well to Gods Kingdom....!

All these chapters will help you to be equipped for LEADERSHIP

28. The Kingdom and Righteousness 1 (Social Action)

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matt. 6:33).

The kingdom is, to a large extent, recognizable by the seeking of a Biblical righteousness. Are we seeking *that* righteousness? Are we pursuing it? Are we practicing it? Biblical righteousness is found above all in the person of Jesus Christ. He was that righteousness (John 16:8-10; Rom. 3:22; II Cor. 5:21; II Pet. 1:1), and he spoke about it. He is also our righteousness (= reconciliation with God). Through a personal relationship with Him, by following Him, and putting His words into practice, we give form to this righteousness.

Jesus' program of righteousness comes to us supremely in the Sermon on the Mount (see chapter three). It is a deeply resounding witness of the concern God has for us, for humanity. The Sermon on the Mount fits perfectly with the Ten Commandments and the call of many of the prophets of the Old Testament, who spoke of doing justice, righteousness, caring for foreigners, the poor, orphans, the sick, for widows, keeping the tyrants and rich in check. In the New Testament, this is finely repeated in the book of James. Jesus too makes a number of very clear social remarks about the kingdom:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me

nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. They also will answer, Lord when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you? He will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life' (Matt. 25:31-46).

By treating the least in this way, we give them a new worth as people. In my opinion, this is one of the central points of the kingdom.

Righteousness is not only a religious experience (reconciliation with Jesus), but it is also very concrete and practical.

And this is where the problems start. In my book 'Reflections' (Nadenken 1990, Continental Sound/Christian Artists), I make a appeal for a new thinking through of many societal problems; this is important because people, particularly in Evangelical circles, concentrate on the development of a personal faith and limit concrete acts of faith to evangelism, missions and assistance to drug users, and similar things.

The Biblical call to action is much greater and wider, comprehending *every area* of our lives! And it *also* touches social, economic, societal, political restoration.

A first step is to work in your own personal circle. That's where acts of charity should be given new form. Our witness concerns precisely the way we are and live, and should not resemble the verbal violence one meets with in 'Jehova's Witnesses'.

A second step is action undertaken by the church community: the organization of the deacons. This is the first form of structural help for the poor, mistreated, needy. Paul called upon us to do this.

A third step is organized action in regard to injustice. Many problems are not incidental (such problems can be solved by setting up a one time task force) but structural.

What can you do about structural problems to give righteousness concrete form?

Through the centuries, Christians have found various answers.

In the Middle Ages guilds were organized. Within such guilds there was care, training and protection. Some guilds were the predecessors of trade unions.

The French Revolution made short work of the remains of the guilds, and the church also suffered greatly at its hands. The French Revolution did not bring freedom, but rather greater disappointment and poverty. After this, in the nineteenth century, there were no forces to lead capital and the industrial revolution into the lines of righteousness. Everyone knows about the terrible results this had in creating an industrial proletariat. Is it strange that Marx received so much attention? The mistreatment of men, women and children was it an indictment? It is understandable that approximately one hundred years ago, Christians started to deal structurally with these wrong circumstances. The first social congress organized by Abraham Kuyper (a Dutch Christian theologian and Prime Minister) and the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* were milestones. Christians did not want revolution but change along the Biblical lines of righteousness. They did not throw bombs, destroy machines, but in consultation (that was and is a testimony) they worked for ways to give practical content to the Biblical command to care for the poor, to combat the terrible dehumanizing working conditions, poverty, etc. Many evangelical organizations began their work with prostitutes, drug addicts, etc., which bore much blessing, at this time.

In essence, the Christian labour movement is just an organized way of dealing with structure problems.

What were the most important questions one hundred years ago?

- renewing of societal life;
- new awareness and maturity of the workers;
- working for their interests.

This should be achieved by means of negotiation and only in the last instance by strikes.

A great deal has been achieved via the labour movement and the fantastic commitment of many upright Christians; we can only be proud of what's happened in these hundred years.

In some evangelical and reformed circles people go out of their way to avoid the Christian labour movement. Why is this?

- Sometimes there are misconceptions, e.g. 'the labour movement is only about greed, power, revolution, strikes'.
- Sometimes people do not realize that the Christian labour movement is born out of a very evangelical impulse and that resounds still after one-hundred years.
- Sometimes people forget that you can't solve structural problems individually.

Together, with one another, we have the possibility of witnessing for righteousness and of giving it concrete form by taking action.

- Sometimes people think that the labour movement is no longer necessary in our time. This is completely contrary to the reality of the matter.

Unfortunately, even though many injustices have disappeared, many other problems have taken their place:

- the huge number of unemployed and unemployable people;
- the newly poor, without much opportunity;
- the many foreigners in our country;
- care for God's creation (the environment).

The Christian labour movement translates this into a few directive ideas, which give policy and action distinct form:

- righteousness;
- freedom;
- stewardship;
- durability;
- participation;
- solidarity.

It is worth reading what the Dutch Christian Labour Association (CNV) literature and other Christian Labour Unions say on these matters. Every Christian: evangelical, reformed, catholic will discover how integrally the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount and the call of the prophets are concretely and practically worked out in these directive ideas. (of the christian labor association)

Even I, who came from a Christian background, but stayed at an arms length from the labour movement, can only state after thorough study and reflection: yes, the Christian labour movement can be Biblically supported, is needed and necessary, and has great importance now that we have to deal with the great problems of the twenty-first century.

It doesn't help locking yourself up in your own church like a fortress. Neither does it help to make Europe into an 'invincible fortress'.

The great challenges for us lie in the way we translate the story of the good Samaritan into our direct surroundings, in our work, in our working conditions, in our place, in our national politics, in Europe, in the world. The office of all believers puts the responsibility into our own hands, my hands. And therefore I must act. Hence, praying, reflecting, discussing, policy making, developing plans of action, influencing processes, making choices, voting.

29. The Kingdom and Righteousness 2 (Political choices)

Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10, from the Lords Prayer).

In the tradition I came from, people did not vote. Politics, voting, etc. were associated with power, domination, oppression, cheap compromises (instead of standing firm) and considered the height of conformity to this world. As a born-again Christian, politics was the last thing one would engage in. No, *'You, however, did not come to know Christ that way'* (Eph. 4:20). Hence, you were expected to close yourself off from the evil world outside, as a holy elite. If there were people having problems along the road, then, just like the priest and Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), you passed by on the other side, because your discussions were so much higher and holier than 'the world', since they were about the character of God, salvation, His return and your devotion. Dirty our hands? No...

By thinking in this way I did not notice that precisely the person whom the Jews looked down on (the Samaritan) was the one who was willing to get his hands dirty in trying to solve the problem. And what does Jesus say? If you want to love God above all and your neighbor as yourself, do what the Samaritan did, because he showed mercy at work!

How I held myself above everything by means of my reasoning 'because Jesus did not start a political party, so neither should we become active in politics'.

How stupid and superficial my thinking was.

Indeed, His kingdom was not of this world, as Jesus says to the ruler in his time, Pilate, who could only reply cynically, 'what is truth?' (John 18:36-38). And on the basis of political expediency, he let them crucify Jesus. (While Jesus is precisely *the way, the truth and the life.*) In spite of this, Jesus wanted His followers to live in this world and be 'salt' and 'light' in every aspect, only, without being *from* this world, that is, full of the spirit of the world, e.g. lust, jealousy, spite, evil, gossip, cheating, dishonest in business (Gal. 5:19:10-11), etc.

The discussion with Pilate about power was in great measure a political discussion (John 19:10-11).

Look again at the part of the Sermon on the Mount which contains the

beatitudes.

This part is dynamite; it is a real appeal and challenge. It is the social, political and economic program of Jesus' kingdom, which is applied through us in the here and now.

Sometimes it is asserted that the Sermon on the Mount is only 'proclamatory'. Even then it still calls us to perform very practical deeds. Not deeds which are empty expressions, but deeds which translate the Sermon on the Mount into matters of righteousness. A righteousness which is not only theory but the DOING of righteousness. This doing is based on expressing the idea of 'love for our neighbour', which is to do something for or together with the other person.

Thinking through this call brings the kingdom about in deed.

What were things like in the first centuries? To begin with, Paul made use of his rights as a citizen; that too was a political decision! James also took a definite social and political position (James 2:6). If one reads the church fathers and the letters in the New Testament, it rapidly becomes clear that it was definitely not only slaves and plebeians that accepted the gospel; it was also the middle classes, the craftsmen, farmers, fishermen, merchants; and even after the first century, among the Christians, there were many involved in local government and the army. There were even believers among the families of the Ceasars and the Senators.

It could have been a peaceful revolution if Ceasar had not decided that he was God, forcing everyone to acknowledge him as such. Refusal led to persecution. Many, like Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego, preferred the fiery furnace rather than bowing to an idol. It is sad that things got out of hand; nevertheless, the blood of the martyrs (with their courage and bravery) are the seeds of the church. The courage to choose for this and to live and to die for the ideal of the kingdom was also a political choice (i.e. not to recognize Ceasar as 'Lord') which impressed many. Eventually this led to a totally different situation.

Christians made different choices which really had a great political influence. That, eventually led to the situation in which the medieval church also had to have political power and control of the state. This led nowhere.

History teaches that the state must not control the church, just as little as the church should control the state. But Christians find themselves in both areas. Each, however, has a lot to say to the other, because in both areas we need to seek and think through the question of what their purpose is; upon this basis, norms, values and culture can be given form.

How blind I was. I read right over the Biblical examples of the men of God who bore political responsibility and achieved things which were a blessing to a people (and not for God's people only).

Examples:

- Joseph even reached the position of ruler of Egypt. And when he was able to leave, he remained in his position.
- Daniel was the chief advisor of the kings of Mesopotamia, which is like being a cabinet minister today
- Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego were like government commissioners.
- Mordechai was the chief counselor (minister) of the king of Persia.
- And we should not forget the Judges of Israel. They were spiritual and political leaders.
- It is remarkable that even heathen potentates like Cyrus and Nebukadnessar were servants of God in their political choices (Isa. 44:28, 45:1. Cyrus is even called the anointed of God! Jer. 27:6-8).
- Special mention should be made of the ancient prophets who made a number of political statements. A very important one came from Ezekial when he wiped the floor with the leaders of the people (Ezek. 32). This passage speaks over the heads of the people to all political leaders, telling them how they ought to treat the people. John Smith once said that this text should be read at the opening of every parliament each year. The misuse of power and position is shown forth for what it is.

Throughout all of history, and up to the present day, there have been Christians involved in politics who acted with integrity. Personally, I am most impressed by the evangelical, William Wilberforce who struggled two hundred years ago in parliament to abolish slavery. The member of the lower house was successful!

Motivated by his faith, he was a great philanthropist who practiced mercy wherever possible.

Regardless of how I looked at things, how ever many years I thought through my position, I was always brought to the conclusion that as a Christian we cannot withdraw ourselves from politics; it too is a domain where righteousness has to be practiced. Politics is precisely the sum of rules agreed upon to allow society to function.

If you think through the message of the kingdom, you will find there is every reason to work for a just society. From your faith, there is a direct connection to the input from your vision of life or world view, for your choices and decisions.

Strangely enough, in the ordering of a state, the same considerations are

involved as those in a labour union: viz. the questions of justice, solidarity, mercy, love of your neighbour. And what does this mean: practically, in terms of legislation regarding criminal code, foreign policy, national polity, education policy, subsidies, the arts, media, health, the poor, the poor in opportunity, etc.?

In a changing political landscape, and with great international changes going on, many questions have become extremely timely!

The question I want to ask is what does the kingdom have to do with politics? It is answered with Jesus' answer: do as the Samaritan: dare to take your hands out of your pockets and help; get involved and don't withdraw. What are some of the possibilities of political action for Christians?

- voting behaviour;
- become a member of a group or organization;
- take part in research commissions, voters associations;
- take part in leadership training;
- city council member;
- take part on a commission;
- national politics (parliament);
- etc.

Besides this there is still the role every Christian can play in local politics without immediately joining one or the other party. For example, if a local council takes a decision which is contrary to justice, take action (gather signatures, petition, organize discussions). The church should facilitate your work.

Let us do all of this only with the goal of being a blessing, e.g.

- imagine that they are going to close a youth hang-out, play ground, skating rink, football field, etc.; go into action;
- take action for safety, the environment, etc.
- take action to promote the sheltering and integration of minorities, etc. Here too, our personal deeds can be an illuminating light.

15 STEWARDSHIP

In Christian circles in which attention is paid to political and social matters, the concept of 'stewardship' is very important. Why?

Stewardship appears to be one of the most important pillars of justice or righteousness, viz. the way and the goal with which we govern and direct things.

First of all the creation (Gen. 2:15); God placed it in the hands of men, to be used and cared for.

Jesus compares the Kingdom of God with someone who went on a journey and put his possessions into the hands of his slaves (Math. 25:14-30). One received five talents, another two and yet another one talent (rather large sums). The first two were able to earn one hundred percent profit. The third buried his. And this person was judged for doing so. Why? Because he was not a good steward. He was not faithful in the challenge he was given. What I find striking about this story is that the owner did not say how the gifts were supposed to be used. He gave the slaves absolute creative freedom. The Kingdom of God is so important, in fact, that we should be willing to sacrifice everything for it. (Matt. 13:44-45; Luke. 12:33)

The importance of good management and bring forth fruit is also apparent from another parable, viz. unrighteous tenant farmers (Matt. 21:33). These unrighteous tenants wanted to take over the property and then they treated the messenger in a horrible way; finally they murdered the heir and refused to pay the rent, i.e. part of the harvest. It should be clear that these tenants were judged.

'Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.' (1 Peter 4:10)

There is no difference between natural gifts, spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 4:1-2), property, doing business, concern for labourers, people in need, management,

nature, etc. With everything and in everything we must be good stewards, as servants whose purpose it is to assist everyone and everything to be fruitful and unfold itself. (Matt. 24:45-51; Who will take the challenge? Cf. Luke 12:42 'The Lord answered, Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time.')

From making coffee to directing an estate; from art to proper use of water, from local politics to mass-media, from family to caring for the sick; from education to liturgy; everything is related to good stewardship. Trying to escape this or to let things go will be judged by the Lord as a case of burying one's talents.

Righteousness is to take upon yourself stewardship for every sphere of life and to put it into practice. The result will inevitably be a valuable, exciting, meaningful, inspiring, challenging, social, human society with real development or unfolding.

18 MY NEIGHBOUR

'But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, And who is my neighbour?' (Luke 10:29)

How human it is and how often we hide behind unreal arguments and questions of detail. We ask:

- Who is my neighbour?
- What is truth?
- Is there a God and a law?

The list of such questions is long. People gladly occupy themselves with such questions. And in the mean time they do nothing; they neglect what they could have done. Hiding behind such so-called legitimate questions leads to unrighteousness. This we see in politics, in negotiations between management and union workers, we see it within businesses and in so many places.

The Bible verse quoted above is the lead-in to the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus tells the story to illustrate the meaning of neighbourly love (Luke 10:30-37). The act of care was not done by a religious education leader or an artistic or business leader, but by one looked down on by society (in the Dutch context, someone like a muslim foreign worker or Gypsy; the USA-context: a mexican, etc.). Jesus then says: *'Go and do likewise'* (Luke 10:37). Righteousness is action.

This practical righteousness, this showing mercy came from somewhere. The speaker at the beginning of the chapter started with the question: 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' (Luke 10:25). Jesus then asks this person: What is written in the law? And the person knows how to express that very well: *'He answered: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your strength and with all your mind and Love your neighbour as yourself'* (Luke 10:27). It must have been clear to Jesus that the discussion was only theory. What the person did not do was to really believe and hence put it into practice. Then Jesus says, very strikingly: *'Do this and you will live'* (Luke 10:28).

Believe and act!

What? The summary of the law and the prophets (with the Ten Commandments at the center) is expressed as: Love God with all your heart, understanding and actions. (Cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Rom. 9:8-10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). Only from out this vertical relationship is it possible to put the horizontal

(i.e. regarding my neighbour) into practice.

Only this strong, inward conviction makes it possible to achieve social, compassionate actions, a human community in which justice and righteousness dominate. Without a vision the people perish (Prov.28:18) Without faith the motor of mercy, social action, responsibility and righteousness stops; and we are faced with only a gray landscape of pure pragmatism.

How and where should we begin? With the things which are at hand, which are my `neighbours.

30. The Kingdom and His Worthiness

I just keep coming back to the Sermon on the Mount (see chapter 3); What it expresses is the great respect and unique valuing God has for human beings and for particular kinds of actions. It makes you stop and think. Moreover, when you look at the life of Jesus, you are struck by the high value he places on children, women and even foreigners.

What a shining example. Yes, the kingdom is a reign of dignity that can shine through us to others.

The dignity translates directly into valuable things like the fruits of the Spirit (see chapter 15, 18, 22). Fruit grows; in other words, it can take time for our lives to be transformed from egocentric ones to ones reflecting the values of the kingdom. What an inner peace this gives, knowing that we no longer have to be driven by ourselves (or others). Finally, you may lead your own life being led by God's hand, a life with new norms.

Since from these values there is a thread leading to the norms which we will make use of for ourselves, our lives with others and the wider community. True norms appear then to be derived from the gospel. Here it appears how practical the kingdom is.

The norms and values of the gospel give us a new identity. Identity is the way you are (the factuality) which is something different from the way you feel about yourself (feelings and image development must be subordinate to your faith and action). And this new awareness will give you an oasis of rest in the midst of turbulent times, because you know `who you may be in Christ' (1 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 2:16, 3:26, 5:6).

And in this oasis of rest, which you can experience, there is suddenly room again for enjoyment, creativity, to have pleasure, to laugh and to cry. How rich, deep, great and good is life then at God's hand, the life of the kingdom.

Yes the kingdom transforms us into people with a royal dignity, which gives me a new worth as a human being. (See also the passage from Matt. 25:31-46, about caring for the least.)

31. The Kingdom and the Church

There is no place in Scripture where it says that the kingdom will be the church. Hence, we must be careful about how we determine the importance of the church congregation.

Jesus did not himself say anything about the forming of faith communities; He only called all of us to spread the gospel of the kingdom and to live it.

The apostles did mention the existence of a variety of small (house) churches (the primitive church) and a few large churches.

And if you think about it, meeting together as church congregation is a logical thing, since here is a place people can be instructed from the Bible and worship God (the liturgical aspect). A church also has the necessary social aspect (a refuge), and the very important transcendent aspect (receiving forgiveness and forgiving others.)

What is the church for me?

The 'ideal' church congregation is wonderfully described, in my opinion, in the letter to the Corinthians. *'When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church'* (I Cor. 14:26).

From this verse it appears that the gatherings were very creative.

Not a one-man show, but there were contributions from many different people. How far this is from some of our contemporary churches. Why do young people often leave our churches? Could it be because they don't get a chance to contribute, because we don't make use of their creativity and gifts? Why should young people or other church members not be allowed to make a contribution? Why shouldn't they be allowed to think and pray about liturgy, reading, preaching, music? And why can't the congregation be a creative congregation with a lot of music (from classical to religious-rock music), with drums, mime, drama, and visual arts? A church in which the gifts begin to be used (spiritually and creatively) will be a growing church (see my book *The Creative Church*, 1993 Continental Sound/ Christian Artists), a church with a Word for the world, a word which attracts many people once again: the gospel of the kingdom.

And that means, moreover, practical work for the kingdom: deacons, social work; this too is a Biblical witness.

27. The Kingdom and Women

Because of the fall the harmony which was intended was lost: between God and man, between man and nature, and between man and woman. Misuse, manipulation, struggle for power came about (Gen. 3:16), instead of equality (Gen. 1:26). Not the divine fashion of a serving-rule, but that of brute force took over; not the exercise of spiritual authority but that of authoritarian rule. The idea was that men and women, however different, would live with equal dignity, and together they would *rule and care for the creation* (Gen 1:26-28, 2:15). Sometimes people claim that the Bible is precisely the book that oppresses women and opposes emancipation. **Nothing is farther from the truth.**

Through the whole of Biblical history, God has called women to occupy every office, in spite of the fall:

- *Leadership of the people of Israel* out of slavery into freedom:

Miriam was one of the leaders along with Moses and Aaron (Ex. 15:20, I Cron. 6:3; she was also a leader, otherwise she would not be included in this list; Micah 6:4 recognizes her leadership).

- After occupying the promised land, the tribes were led by *Judges*: one of them was a woman, namely, Deborah (Judges 4, 5).

- *Royal highness*: Esther was queen and saved her people through her actions (the book of Esther in the Old Testament).

- *Doing business*: the woman in the book of Proverbs was no powerless chattel but a hard working woman successful in her business (Prov. 31:10-31).

- *Romance*: in the Song of Songs, the tantalizing beauty of a woman is sung about and the equal role of man and woman in the play of love is portrayed (i.e. the Song of Songs in the Old Testament).

- *Care*: there is talk of being like 'a mother of Israel' (Judges 5:7, II Sam 20:19), the apex of care and commitment.

- Israel was a beautiful virgin (cf. Hosea) but she behaved like a cheap whore.

- *Surrender*: Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the great example of surrender (Luke 1:28-38, 49). In her day, being pregnant out of wedlock was the biggest scandal imaginable. All generations will honour her.

- *Prophet*: Being a prophet was the highest possible spiritual office, the closest to God. Miriam was a prophetess (Ex. 15:36). Ann was a prophetess (Luke 2:36). The daughters of Phillip were also prophetesses (Acts 21:9). They spoke as such and gave instruction. Deborah was a prophetess (Judges 4:4), as was Huldah (II Cron. 34:22) and Anna (Luke 2:36).

- *Travelling Evangelists*: Aquila and Priscilla were a married couple who traveled around building up the churches (Acts 18:2, 18, 26, I Cor. 16:19, II Tim. 4:19). The fact that Priscilla's name was mentioned indicates that she had

a definite job (She is sometimes even named first).

- *Leaders*: There were also women who led services; so it would appear from the end of a few of Paul's letters: 'Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house' (Col. 4:15); 'Claudia and all the brothers greet you' (II Tim. 2:21. The listing of men's names with a woman's name included in it indicates that this woman also had a position of service.) 'The elder to the chosen lady' (II John) is addressed to a woman. References to 'my little children' in the letter should be understood as referring to members of the congregation rather than to her own children.

- *Following Jesus*: In the cultures of the time of Jesus (and nowadays too, actually) it was considered extremely improper for women to follow after or travel around with men. Jesus made no objections. He gave women true value. 'There was a whole group of women who followed Jesus' (Luke 8:1-3, 23:27, 49, Matt. 27:55, Mark 15:40-41).

- *Leadership Team* (New Testament): Paul at least once took a woman with him on one of his missionary journeys, it would appear from one remark. He also says that other apostles did so at times (I Cor. 9:1-5).

- *Respect and Worth*: In various places Jesus departed completely from cultural conceptions and traditions:

1. He spoke (at first alone) with a Samaritan(!) woman (John 4:4-42).

a. Jews did not have commerce with Samaritans.

b. You did not speak alone with a woman. The way in which Jesus addressed her was particularly respectful.

2. He honoured the faith of a heathen woman. A Jewish rabbi did not have dealings with heathens (Matt. 15:21-28.)

3. The woman who was caught in adultery was not condemned by Jesus (John 8:2-11). (Why didn't they bring the man with them too? The fact that he was not brought along demonstrates, in my view, that it was a set-up whereby a man, a situation, or a weakness of the women was used at the orders of the Pharisees). Jesus appeared to be very understanding of human weakness. Only, go and sin no more. He restored the woman's own worth.

4. Prostitutes and tax collectors (the outcasts of the culture) were real people for Him (Matt. 21:31, 11:19, Luke 15:1, Matt. 9:10, Luke 7:37-50); he associated with them, celebrated with them; he even ate and drank with them (thereby violating the cultic rules).

5. On the cross He asked His disciple John to take care of his mother Mary (John 19:26-27). After Jesus was gone, as a widow, she could die of hunger if there were no children to take care of their mother.

6. Mothers and children were welcome to be with him (Matt. 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17).

7. *Legal position*. You can't just dump your wife; Jesus said pointed things about just sending away or divorcing wives (Matt. 19:3-10). He referred back to how it was in the beginning: men and women were equal!

8. *Serving*: In marriage, you are not simply the boss: as a husband you love your wife and as a wife you love your husband (I Cor. 7:1-5) Note- a wife has authority over her husband's body!! The so-called strong husband should take good care of his wife, (I Pet. 3:7; husbands must honour their wives. They are delicate vessels and fellow inheritors of grace, just like men.) (Eph. 5:25, 28-33, Col. 3:19.) The husband should be like a priest for the family (he shouldn't play the pope, but act with spiritual insight, bringing reconciliation, overcoming contradictions, sacrificing himself and thus being an example and not a dictator). To be a priest is also to be a spiritual umbrella under which others can develop themselves.

- *In Christ* there is neither male nor female! (Gal. 3:26-28; notice, women too are sons of God, and hence, in everything heirs of Christ.) In other words, through faith and the message of the kingdom, everything is returned to the original creation design. The gospel is hence also the message of the equal worth and dignity of man and woman.

- *Legal protection*: In ancient culture women did not count. It is all the more remarkable then that in the books of the law of Moses, women received a clear legal position. A woman could have ownership of things; she could inherit things and continue the good family name; she could not simply be sent away by a mean husband. When there were rumors of adultery, the question had to be looked into seriously. If an unmarried young woman was taken by a guy, then he had to stick with her. In respect to these laws too, women enjoyed much protection which stood in stark contrast to the cultures of the day (Ex. 21-23, Lev. 18, Lev. 20, Num. 5, Num. 6, Num. 27:1-11, 36:1-13) which were full of abuses, incest, temple prostitution, female sacrifices, fertility rites, child sacrifice, etc. etc. The Ten Commandments also provide protection for women (Ex. 20:1-17, Deut. 21:10-14, 22:13-30, 24:1-5.)

- The prostitute who hid the spies that came from Israel received a place in Israel and even became one of Jesus' forebears (Joshua. 2:1, 6:25, Matt. 1:5).

- *The book of Ruth*: A wonderful ideal. This foreign woman is also one of the ancestors of Jesus (Ruth 4:13-17, Matt. 1:5).

- The gospel of the kingdom is just as much for women as for men. Read about how many have been wonderfully saved, e.g. Mary Magdalen (Luke 8:1-3).

- Both men and women believed the gospel (cf. Acts 8:12).

- The New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-2), the greatest work of art of all times, is compared with a gloriously dressed bride. If a woman was an inferior creature, the New Jerusalem would not be compared with such a fantastic bride.

In Acts, we frequently read about women who came together to serve God (Acts 16:13, 17:4, 12), and of groups of women who were honoured by God. In this too, their position of equal worth is apparent.

Through the salvation of Jesus, everything is returned to the original creation order: so that man and women together will rule and protect, and hence exercise their authority. Both are of equal worth and thereby as man and women both are unique, complementing one another!

I myself can only observe that if we take the intention of the Bible seriously and put it into practice in our lives there would no longer be any feministic or emancipation problems. Women in office or in leadership positions, a problem? You *can not*, in my opinion, base this on the Bible.

26. The Kingdom and Beauty

The boss of the kingdom is God.

It strikes me that in various places in the Bible we find mention of: His beauty or magnificence (Isa. 33:17, 33:21, Ex. 15:11, 24:16, Ps. 63:3, 104:31, 138:5, Hab. 2:14, Matt. 6:13, Rev. 19:1). Why? So often we think of God as the Person of the word. It is certainly incredible that the Eternal wants to talk with us (Ps. 50:1, 85:9, Luke 4:36, 24:32, John 11:42, 16:1, 33). But why does He so definitely want to communicate with human beings like us?

We are created in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27).

We are an expression of his creativity. Yes, God is the God who creates and this character trait is in us all. Without God, everything would be formless. With God, everything is a dynamic process of becoming. We are reborn, new creations (II Cor. 5:17). And our expressions can also be a part of the kingdom.

Does God also like our creativity? Our expressions?

Our art?

To this a resounding yes is spoken. Yes, the kingdom of God is all about our creative expressions.

Even more, God values them very highly.

The Pictorial Arts

At the time of creation, the world was one great art work. God repeatedly says on each day of creation 'See, it is good.' This word used here also means handsome, beautiful.

The tabernacle (of Moses, Ex. 25, 26, 35:36-38) and the temple (of Solomon, I Kings 5:17-6:38, 7:13-51, II Cron. 3:1-4, 22) were very special works of art.

Even the holy of holies was full of sculptures.

People and foreign rulers came from far and wide to see this work of art.

God is a patron of the arts; this is evident from the coming New Jerusalem, which will descend from heaven (Rev. 21).

Breathtaking beauty, unimaginably impressive.

It is remarkable that the peoples and the rulers (Rev. 21:25-26) will bring things of value (the word also indicates objects) and uniqueness into the New Jerusalem: art works, folk art, inventions, etc. Everything has a place! What a fantastic city to spend eternity in! God is the God of creativity and (pictorial) arts. (In order to understand this topic more fully see my book *Royal Creativity*, 1987, Continental Sound/Christian Artists.)

Music

God likes music, and how He longs to hear our songs. He dwells in the songs of praise of His people.

How clear this is from the Psalms! Music plays a huge role throughout the Bible, Old and New Testaments: many kinds are mentioned, e.g. instrumental music (David played the harp for Saul, I Sam. 16:14-23), popular verse, lamentations, protest songs, love songs, dance tunes. Musicianship will continue on into the new heaven and the new earth; so it would appear from the book of Revelation (Rev. 5:8-9, 14:3, 15:1-4); music will continue to resound through all eternity. Yes, God is a God of creativity who puts Himself in the tones of endless numbers of musical styles, vocal and instrumental. (To understand this subject more fully see my book, *Music and Ministry*, 1986, Continental Sound/Christian Artists). And *Revivals & Music*, 1991, Continental Sound/Christian Artists.)

The Dramatic Arts/The Art of the Stage

Is God also a God who places importance on the bodily forms of expression? We have to search a little in the Bible, but there are important things to be found. Everyone knows the story of David dancing in honour of God, when the ark was brought back to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:5, 15-16). But there are many more passages about dance, mime, acting, etc. Yes, God likes our bodily forms of expression.

(For a more extensive treatment of this subject see my booklet: *Pas-de-Deux*, 1994, Continental Sound/Christian Artists.)

Other Art Forms

The Bible is full of other forms of art, all of which are highly valued by God.

Poetry: some of the Psalms, the Song of Songs, I Cor. 13.

Prose: Esther, Ruth, among others.

Story telling: e.g. the parables (as far as that goes Jesus was a great artist).

The parables really offer a great challenge to us to restore the honour of the art of story telling. Such parables challenge the listener to choose a particular side and by so doing an interaction is induced with ones motivations, faith and life; and 'truths' are communicated in a special way.

Jewelry, and Fashion: examine sometime the clothing of the priests and Levites.

God believes in a diversity of cultures.

At Pentecost (Acts 2:5-12) a miracle took place, not that all the cultures were

eliminated or made to conform to the Hebrew culture, no, but that everyone understood the message in his *own* language. What went wrong at Babel was restored here in a special way; for the believers, then, it was the impetus to take the gospel to other cultures. Later this was confirmed at a meeting of the church (Acts 15:1-20) in which the apostles declared that believers who were gentiles did not have to observe the Jewish law; in other words, one did not first have to become a Jew in order to follow Christ. From that time onward, cultural diversity was a reason for the growth of the number of Christians. Since the nineteenth century, this has also been applied in missions with the result that the number of Christians has grown rapidly on all the continents, apart from demographic developments. (In Western Europe alone, there has been little growth.)

Yes, God's kingdom is a kingdom of creativity and creation. We have the nature of the Father. He is pleased when we are creative: at this time *here*, and soon *there*.

21 CORRUPTION

'Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.' (Luke 16:10-15)

In this passage Jesus penetrates to the very depths of a person's attitude. If you are faithful with a little then you can be trusted with a lot. If you are corrupt with a little then you will be corrupt with a lot. Things begin so easily with a little. Are we trustworthy with the postage stamp treasury? Do we or don't we take a pen without asking from the office..... These small choices can apparently have big consequences.

Do we really want to develop into a leader, a director in business or become important in politics, etc. etc.? Then we have to begin at the bottom. If we show that we can produce good work on the shop floor, then we can be given a higher position. If we prove that we are trustworthy in one place then we can be given another advancement. It takes strength to bear the weight of the world and hence we need preparation, experience, growth, challenges. Sometimes we forget that trustworthiness and loyalty cannot be bought with big salaries. Much is done to establish conditions which will minimize the problem of the lack of loyalty, but Jesus brings it clearly to attention. Essentially it is a spiritual principle. Either you make the ethical choice for the one or for the other. And this starts with small things.

Salon socialists, who have never had any first hand contact with the true problems of workers, can never have true solidarity. I see too many people around me who are only what they are 'in name'. Some studied, for example, to be spiritual leaders (cf. Luke 20:47), but were they really called and did they get experience and purification in the field? Some studied to become labour union functionaries, but did they really know what work was and the true

problems on the work floor? Some studied to be managers, but had they ever accepted the leadership of others? I see this in politics too; do politicians really understand the problems the ordinary people face? Laws should serve to regulate but not unnecessarily hinder our lives. Is it possible for decisions to be made at the lowest possible level? (This involves the principles of authority in each sphere of its own subsidiarity.)

These matters concern questions of justice and keeping responsibility at the lowest level. This is where the primary decisions are made. From there they reach upward, a renewal from the bottom up. This also explains why people are so shocked at the buying-off of leaders (spiritual, business, political, etc.). Your trust is abused; righteousness (right dealings) is abused; the ethical foundations of society have been tampered with. This demonstrates that a so-called 'value free' society does not exist. If I, as an ordinary citizen or worker, do not act ethically, even the harshest penalties cannot stop me. Hence, at my own level, I must make the choice between righteousness or corruption.

Jesus has no sympathy, at all, for people who are only pretending or are pretenders. *'You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts'* (Luke 16:15). What a comfort to all of those who wrestle with hypocritical pretending. The Lord sees through them! (Luke 18:9). In another place Jesus says: *'Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy'* (Luke 12:1b). Hypocritical pretending is infectious, as yeast penetrates throughout the dough. People are infected, but hypocrisy will come to light so that the scales shall fall from people's eyes. And then it will appear what is true and what is false. Evil, deceit, fraud, persecution only goes on so long. The true is what is just and righteous and eternal. This is an encouragement at moments when we are confronted with corruption and corrupt situations. We are called to penetrate to the heart of the matter and to unmask the hypocrisy (Luke 12:2-4) which can so easily corrupt any power or authority structure.

And if we have a high opinion of ourselves, let us examine ourselves repeatedly. Are we like this only because it makes our egos feel good? There will come a day when you will fall.

28 HOW TO TAKE ACTION

*'Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action. When Moses was forty years old he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. He saw one of them being **mistreated** by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, Men you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other? But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, Who made you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday? When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons. After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. Then the Lord said to him, Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt. This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, Who made you ruler and judge? He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert.'* (Acts 7:22-36)

The story of Moses was a wonderful example of a man who was concerned about others. He was well brought up, educated, was a good speaker and his intentions were very good. He was a fighter of injustice based on his own human knowledge and insight. But his actions for the sake of justice only ended in murder. Even if the situation made this very plausible it did not justify murder; Moses himself committed a much greater injustice than the one he wanted to fight. The big opponent of injustice had to flee in dishonour as a result of his impassioned action guided by his own insight and force. Nevertheless, God knew that his intentions were pure and that he really cared about his people. It only took forty years to ennoble and change him. When he was really pure, when he trusted only in God and asked Him for wisdom, insight and guidance, only then could he become the great liberator and law

giver of his people.

The story of Moses presents us with a dilemma. Do we look to the wisdom of 'Egypt' to guide us or the wisdom of God? (This is also a crucial point for organizations that want to maintain a distinct identity. It is all too easy to chase after 'quality' in order to be able to compete with the world and thereby ignore the importance of internal motivation and spiritual principles. After a while, there is no difference and having been secularized this organization loses its right to exist. An organization with a distinct identity exists thanks to the identity of its people, personnel and leaders; attention needs to be paid to this.) The insights of this world will never be able to combat injustice in the right way. We do not escape the storm but go from a drizzle into the pouring rain of even more injustice.

Violence calls forth even more violence. It only leads to more hatred. Only forgiveness leads to liberation; only the path of respect and love leads to reconciliation.

The practicing of righteousness does not justify any means possible.

34 PUBLIC JUSTICE

Not long ago, the Dutch Christian political party, the CDA, came out with a report called, 'Public Justice'. It gives a clear explanation of what the foundations of society are and argues that without public justice (righteousness) these foundations cannot exist. I don't have time to explain all of the reasoning, the necessity and the desired consequences here. But while reading through the Bible I found the following brief description of the foundation of public justice:

'For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey (the ones who act it) the law who will be declared righteous. Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.' (Rom. 2:13-15)

Isn't it amazing that from the beginning of creation the principles of good and evil actions, and of righteousness were put in the heart of every human being? It would seem that every person can act according to the principles of righteousness. The question is then whether or not people do this. God's judgment takes place in accordance with how people act with respect to the rules of justice. For believers, the law (summarized in the Ten Commandments) only clarifies what justice is. Believers too must ask themselves how they meet the demands of justice.

Let us now return to the topic of public justice. Even if the principles are present in everyone, what do we do if our fellow citizens do not appear to have a sense of 'public justice'? The government can then only uphold the principles of justice by using different forms of punishment. But will this help? This is a major dilemma. It has been shown that you can punish people as much as you want, but if they don't have the necessary internal conviction this will lead nowhere. Our hearts must be circumcised (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:28-29). What then? Should the government promote religion and conversion? That won't work either. But then the whole discussion about norms and values breaks down. By the way, slogans about a sense of citizenship are of no use at all.

There is no other solution than to extensively discuss, explain and apply the Ten Commandments in the primary schools. And then the summary of the law:

'Love your neighbour as yourself'

All human interaction actually depends upon these rules for action. If these most fundamental truths are understood, then they can be followed with applications such as 'Basic rights and Human rights'.

Wouldn't it better to do the latter without the former? The fear of the absolute basis (which is clearly religious) is a lot of nonsense. The latter is derived from the former and it is not without good reason that it has been able to give form and content to society for three and a half thousand years. whether or not people are believers, the truth may not be covered up.

Moreover, the government must continue to administer punishments. However, this must be linked to educational and alternative service programs in order to make maximum re-socialization possible. This should also be the case with petty crimes. If this problem is not dealt with carefully, large problems will certainly develop. Besides this, we need preventative programs for young people who are on the margins of society and for those who have few opportunities. These things are necessary practical forms of justice which the state must finance, although the execution of these programs must not be carried out by the government.

Returning to where we began: the main goal is to stimulate internal motivation. Are we doing that at school, at work, in politics, in trade unions, in the media, in the family?

41 UNEQUALLY YOKED

*'Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do **righteousness** and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.'* (II Cor. 6:14-16a)

This text is taken out of context again and again in order to assure that Protestants and Catholics don't marry one another, or a Baptist and a Charismatic, or a Christian and a non-Christian. This has caused a lot of pain and suffering. It is even more painful because the text has been so misused.

Let us look at this text to try to see what it really means. The criterion is that if people cannot carry the same load or if the carriers are going in different directions the combination won't work. What is the equal or the unequal element? That is a matter of principles: e.g. righteousness and lawlessness. If we express this in practical terms, this means that if you start a business, a store or a company with someone, the partners should have the same motivation. If one wants to be honest and upright and the other partner wants to get rich quick by fraud then the two do not fit together. Both need to believe in the same basic principle of the business and work according to it. Hence, if the business partner is not a Christian, but like the partner who is, believes in doing business honestly and justly then they are equally yoked and so it will be a success.

This principle can be translated and applied in every area of life, society and politics. In cases where motives and purposes are the same, people can work together as 'equally yoked'.

The text suggests five aspects to which we should pay attention to determine whether it is possible for two or more people to be equally yoked.

- a) Righteousness versus lawlessness.
- b) Light versus darkness.
- c) Christ versus Belial.
- d) Faith versus unbelief.
- e) The temple of God versus idols.

a) Righteousness versus lawlessness has been explained in part above. You can also put it like this: working according to honest rules, justice, in truth; and hence, not engaging in fraud, untruthful documents, bad quality, business lies, bribery, etc. etc.

b) Light versus darkness.

The principles of light are related to openness, truth, frankness, your yes as yes, stick to the content and the spirit of your promises, giving insight, transparency of leadership, letting yourself be venerable, etc. Darkness is related to dishonesty, manipulation, shady dealings, fraud, etc. etc.

c) Christ versus Belial.

Belial was the god to whom sacrifices were given, people even offered their own children. That was an abomination to God. Christ stands for usefulness, eternity, quality of life, social relationships, solidarity and true responsibility. Do we believe in these principles and want to act as Christ did? Or do we follow the principle of Belial: do we sacrifice everything for power, money, success? There really are people who sacrifice their families, children and social relations for money, more power or status. Clearly, these two motivations are different and cannot be combined.

d) Faith and unbelief.

In this sense, what is essentially expressed is that there must be a unity of purpose. Do you together believe that your marriage will endure? Do you believe together that the business will make it? Do you believe together that ... It is noteworthy that more and more businesses are formulating mission statements. The more one supports and the more one believes in it, the better the company will operate. The company suddenly has found a heart and a soul. The Bible passage quoted above, speaks about this: 'what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?' This is just right. You can only take part in something if you believe in it. It is true for every form of partnership. It is a sensible question to be asked when you are applying for a job: why do you believe in this company, why do you want to be part of it. When people start taking different sides this leads to nothing, if you do not 'believe in it' together.

e) The temple of God versus idols.

Your works appear to form a kind of structure together. From the fruits you will know the tree. Does a particular thing bring glory to God? Are these principles of righteousness, solidarity, responsibility, etc?

Or: does it make it apparent that you are serving idols? What are idols? First of all, they are all different forms of darkness and occult practices. Idols can be unbridled lust for career advancement, power for power's sake, greed, trying to

get a bigger and bigger kick, etc.

It should now be clear what is meant by 'unequally yoked'. The wisdom of this passage of scripture is very important. If you are going to form a partnership either personal, business, social or political, you should first consider the basic questions about purpose, intentions, commitment, etc. which are very important to see whether you are equally yoked; since only then will the partnership last.

Returning to the question of who we may marry: Even if two people have the same church background that does not say whether or not they are 'equally yoked'. Frequently, I have seen this kind of marriage fall apart. Forming an equally yoked couple in the personal sphere needs a lot more points of similarity to be successful, (see points a-e). Put differently, a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, or someone who believes differently, can be successful and beautiful if they believe the same concerning points a-e and work from the same basic principles.

More...

From 1970 till today Leen has written 28 books, Ria has written 9 books. Besides these books, their Continental Sound/Christian Artists organization has published another 25 books, 115 songbooks, 125 LP's and CD's. Realised were as well appr. 15 TV broadcasts on national TV and 50 on local channel in Rotterdam. The number of speaking engagements, lectures, coaching, articles, etc is endless.

From 1970 till today appr. 40.000 concerts, shows, events have been organised in churches, halls, theatres and stadiums having appr. 15.000.000 persons as audience accross Europe. Appr. 5.000 young people were selected, trained and send on outreach as The Continentals, Young Continentals, Continental Kids and Disciple. All concerts and events were possible thanks to the Pro Deo help of appr. 150.000 local volunteers. We have to mention too the great work of our professional staff. They all made it to a success.

Soli Deo Gloria

Leen and Ria were pioneers to introduce in Europe:

- 1970 contemporary christian music (The Continentals)
- 1974 pop-rock (New Hope, Wings of Light, Jerusalem, etc)
- 1975 black gospel (Choralerna, Bobby Jones, etc)
- 1975 christian dance (Shekinah, Christian Dance companies, etc)
- 1976 praise and worship (Merv & Merla Watson, Dave & Dale Garratt, Graham Kendrick, etc)
- 1984 pop (Deniece Williams, Barry McGuire, Second Chapter of Acts, Amy Grant, Koinonia, Cliff Richard, etc)
- 1988 reli-musicals (Adrian Snell-the passion- Alpha & Omega; the Dreamer, Living Water, And there was light, Come Together, David, Elijah, You are not alone, It's getting late, etc)
- and so much more....