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## Christan Leadership: A Strange Business

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# Christian leadership: A strange business?

**W**hile it is an honor to be called by God to serve in one of His organizations, working for the church can seem to be a strange business. On the one hand, the importance of this life calling cannot be overestimated; it is a lifework with eternal consequences. On the other hand, we are weak and woefully unprepared for any task with eternal consequences. Thankfully, each church leader (and member) can proclaim with Paul, “This is a faithful saying . . . , that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15).<sup>1</sup> Amazingly, God has called us! We are sinners, growing in Christ, and we are His leaders for His church. Praise God; He has not left us without support!

## The most advanced casebook

Looking at Christ’s example of dealing with His disciples, you can see that leadership is a gift of grace. He spent time training them, yet as the culminating event of the universe came—the hour for Christ to drink the cup of God’s wrath—“all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (Matt. 26:56). That night, Christ’s mission on earth looked like a

failure, and so did His training program. But they were not. God’s way of leading defeats the enemy and brings us life.

Perhaps it is time to acknowledge the Bible as the most advanced casebook for leadership learning ever written. From the story of the origin of sin to its final eradication, the great controversy between Christ and Satan provides a landscape for startling lessons of leadership throughout the Bible.

For example, the Bible reveals the power of leadership: As the leader goes, so goes the people. When the leaders of Israel forsook God and led with deceit and false comfort, the people “wandered like sheep” (Zech. 10:2, NABRE). When Israel had a leader that followed God, they prospered (Gen. 47:27). When the people returned to Him, God was patient; He always desired their good. God did not reject His leaders when they made mistakes. Yet God did seek for leaders to continue to grow after His own heart.

## Applications

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has also recognized the importance of leadership development.

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SCAN FOR AUDIO



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In the wake of COVID-19, it launched a set of global initiatives to support church leaders: annual global online conferences both for newly elected leaders (in the spring) and for all church leaders (in the fall), a mentoring program for executive leaders, and the innovative LeadLab program of the Global Leadership Institute (GLI) at Andrews University. These new initiatives are building on past leadership development programs while seeking to reach out to leaders in new ways.

This *Ministry* issue contains five articles that focus on leadership and growing leaders. The article “Shaping the heart of leaders,” by Erich Baumgartner, highlights how God develops leaders throughout a lifetime and pursues His purposes despite human failure and weakness. Boubakar Sanou focuses on the leadership role of the pastor as a catalyst for whole-church ministry.

A perceptive article by Karen Tilstra focuses on the importance of forgiveness, not only for our social and spiritual relationships but also as an essential component of innovation. Randy J. Siebold's article introduces the interplay between leadership and discipleship and the newly developed Leader Growth Framework, an approach used

by the GLI and the growing LeadLab program. Sung K. Kwon's article focuses on the vital role of the leader in connecting the church to the community. The importance and urgency of the church's mission, the challenges of growth, and the tensions of leading change can too often induce leaders to overwork and sometimes burnout. The Practical Pointers column by Jill Buller reveals simple and practical ways to help leaders stay healthy.

As we have been called into this “strange business” as leaders with faults and yet with eternal consequences, following God as our Leader is our only safe approach! May this issue support you (and those you support) as you continue to grow into a leader after God's own heart.



1 Unless otherwise noted, Scripture is from the New King James Version.