

SOUTHWESTERN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD UNIVERSITY
HARRISON SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

ENERGIZING PEOPLE FOR PERFORMANCE

LDR 5223-531

INSTRUCTOR:

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ASSIGNMENT: Reflective reaction paper: "Steering Through Chaos" by Scott Wilson

(edited down for privacy)

STUDENT DATA:

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Natural Opposition to Transitions

This book helped me understand the natural tendencies we all have during transitions. It is a fact that transitions are inevitable, so how can we handle changes the best way? Wilson states that "many churches in transition experience resistance and conflict because they fail to communicate the vision and process in a way that invites feedback and involvement from the congregation" (2015, p. 34). I have experienced firsthand the results of this kind of leadership.

Many years ago, my church went through a name change. The leadership initiated a vote, and having had their previous name for decades; the leadership expected pushback from the congregation. When the day came to vote on the church's new name, the vote favored changing the previous name to the new one. However, while the vote was legally affirmative for the change, our lead pastor noticed that a large number of members voted no. Although he could have proceeded with the name change, he decided to halt the plan out of respect for the people who voted no. A year later, he proposed the change again, and this time, the vast majority of votes were in favor of the change. What changed? Slowing down to consider the people's opinions to the last vote gained colossal respect and buy-in from the people who had voted no. This action demonstrates what Wilson noted when he said, "when your staff and lay leaders feel loved, understood, and appreciated during times of chaos, they will support you and the vision for change" (2015, p. 82). Giving time for the congregation to generate involvement and feedback, and waiting some time, generated respect for the leader because his decision communicated to the congregation that he cared for them.

People Are the Mission

Christian leaders have the well-being of their people in mind. People are not a cog in the system to help us realize our dreams, visions, and expectations; people are the ultimate mission

(Wilson, 2015, p. 77). So, in times of transition, our role is to shepherd people even if they create opposition to the vision. Wilson suggests that "instead of getting angry with the people who seem to get in the way, we find ways to encourage them and we ask them to be partners with us. Instead of assuming that we are defective leaders because we (do not) know what to do, we realize that the greatest leaders of all time lived in ambiguity" (2015, p. 188). Indecisions during transition might create a lack of confidence; however, ambiguity is present in any leadership endeavor. One of the ways to find out if our heart is in the right place is to gauge the level of love we have for the people we lead and the level of humility we demonstrate when confronted with people who create more challenging circumstances for us. (Wilson, 2015, p. 108)

Analyzing to Improve

In chapter six, Wilson makes the argument that "organizations only improve if they analyze what went right, what went wrong, and how they can improve next time" (2015, p.133). I have often used a tool called "four helpful." With this tool, we aim to look at every project and department's performance through the lens of what is right (this is what we can celebrate and replicate), what is wrong (what do we need to fix?), what is missing (this gives us room to add elements), and what is confused that we need to clarify. Although naming these elements does not fix anything immediately, it provides a course of action. More importantly, it clears the air and alerts the rest of the team of what we need to accomplish.

This tool helps us facilitate open dialogue where we talk about what is wrong in our projects and teams clearly and directly. From the outside looking in, people sometimes misinterpret it; individuals who are not used to openly talking about failure could consider it jarring at first. However, using this method helps teams talk about the last ten percent of the truth

and, in doing so, helps foster an environment of trust and collective self-awareness that provides the framework to analyze and improve.

Communicating During Transitions

The last insight I gained from this book was in communication. As Wilson explains in the book, Oaks Church uses a cascading way to relay information (2015, p.85). First, they communicate to top leaders, then to broader audiences, until they inform the whole congregation of the changes they are making. It is essential to understand this method because leaving space for other people to bring interpretation to a situation can breed confusion. Furthermore, as Wilson explains, "when there is a vacuum in our communication with others, the enemy of our souls has a field day" (2015, p. 92).

Personal Interaction to the Video

In times of chaos, Dr. Blakney advises that one must "talk slower, think slower and even walk slower." Slower talk creates clear communication. Instead of rushing, we must learn to assess circumstances quickly but not let them turn us into frantic responders. The past couple of years has taught us much about responding amid confusion. As our response to the pandemic started, we learned to talk with one voice as a church. Making sure every leadership level knew about the changes that were about to happen.

During the early weeks of the lockdowns, my team proposed to our leadership that we needed to create more content. We asked our lead pastor to record special podcasts with thought leaders, and our other ministries created more content around the Sunday messages. However, instead of helping us focus, these different initiatives created sideways energy. Our lead pastor helped us prioritize, and we focused on what was important. We were already in the midst of

chaos, but had this sideways activity continued; we would have found ourselves in the middle of pure self-induced chaos.

Reference list

Wilson, S. (2015). *Steering Through Chaos: Mapping a Clear Direction for Your Church in the Midst of Transition and Change*. Salubris Resources.