Applying Biblical Principles of Discipleship and United Team Work in the Owen Sound Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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Problem. I became pastor of the Owen Sound Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2005. Since then, the church has grown from 67 members to 86 members in 2009. In spite of the numerical growth the regular Sabbath worship service attendance has stayed the same. Pastoral observation suggested that this was due to a lack of spiritual coherence in the church. The primary contributing factor to this was the unsynchronized work of the new converts who have undertaken leadership roles and the existing leadership in creating an atmosphere of unity and concord in the work of fulfilling the Great Commission. Additionally, the church representation at the board was skewed. More than 60% of the church population was under 60 and yet 80% of the board members were over the age of 65. Disputes and the lack of balance in power sharing have been evident through the many conflicts the church has dealt with, that seemed mostly rooted in the control issues of those who have been in the church since its beginning in 1987. As the journey through the project continued I was persuaded more and more that disunity in the church was not primarily an issue of church governance but rather the core problem was one of discipleship. Looking at the problem as one of discipleship led to a further discovery that the problem in the church was mirrored in me. The fires of disunity in the church have been instrumental in bringing to the surface the disunity dross in my own heart and life and centered at its core was an issue of personal discipleship.

Task. The main task of this project is to work out a biblical solution to the ways newcomers into the church will be accepted, trained as leaders, and work harmoniously together with the existing leaders in fulfilling the Great Commission. When I began this project I naively believed that the simple solution to this issue was to establish, teach and enforce biblical principles of fair church governance. However, as I described in the statement of the problem I discovered that church governance was not the core issue; rather the core issue was discipleship. Thus the task morphed into developing a strategy for discipling both new and previously existing leaders and members. This move toward discipling led me to a problem and a task even closer to home.
out there even in my own church, I saw myself as in a mirror. Improvements come only out of a changed agent.

Results. As I reflect on my experience in working with the OSSDAC, I would conclude that going through crises has helped me figure out my own heart issues as well as developing better leadership qualities. It has also helped all of us mature and to know and understand the purpose of having an Adventist church in the area. I have discovered as well that I naturally tend to lean toward an idealistic and have a strong sense of fairness. After the first major conflict and many battles later, I realized I needed to spend more time with the leaders and members helping them find a biblically relevant church that can mature and grow as stated in the Great Commission.

Conclusion. Through my experiences at the OSSDAC the Lord used the fiery furnace flames to reform the failings of his own follower. Looking at the problem of disunity in the church as one of discipleship led to an awakening in my own life. The problem in the church was mirrored in me. Thus the fires of disunity in the church have brought to the surface the dross in my own heart and an issue of personal discipleship. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer and Christian counseling, I have dealt with my fears, bitterness, abuse, moral failure, pursuit of temporal values, hypocrisy, an argumentative competitive spirit and have recaptured ground that was given up to the enemy. I hope this project encourages you to face your own heart issues through prayer and Christian counseling.

Subject Area
Discipling (Christianity), Church group work, Church management

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