

Church Administration

Questions for Discussion

Offered below are discussion questions for each chapter in the book. While these may be used for personal reflection on the material, maximum benefit may be gained through discussion with others in your congregation or organization.

Chapter 1. Administration's Biography: A Holy History

- If administration is integral not peripheral to ministry, describe your understanding of administration and the part it plays in your ministry.
- If someone asked, "What is your theology of administration?" what would you say?
- How well does decision making in your church organization follow the 13 features of how the church made a major policy decision in Acts 10-15?

Chapter 2. Godly Governance

- How would you describe the *type* of governance in your congregation or organization? Is it appropriate to your context and setting? How might you like to see it changed?
- Do you experience a good sense of balance between those involved in governance and administration? If not, what steps might be taken to re-balance?
- Do the governance and administrative patterns in your place of service mirror biblical principles, as well as the eight characteristics for good governance set forth at the beginning of the chapter?

Chapter 3. Boards: Blessed Balladeers

- What image or analogy might you use to describe your board? If it's not currently so, what needs to change for it to become a harmonious chorus of blessed balladeers?
- Describe your understanding of *fiduciary responsibility*. How well do you see yourself and the board as a whole exercising its stewardship? How could it be strengthened?
- Are you satisfied with current processes of board member recruitment, orientation, education, assessment and nurturing? Are there missing dimensions of "intellectual capital" or competencies in your current board make-up? How might any deficiencies be remedied?

Chapter 4. Planning with Passion

- What makes the planning done in your organization valuable or not so valuable? Does planning need tweaking or an overhaul?
- The aftermath of previous planning can serve as an obstacle or aid in present efforts. The last time we did some planning . . .
- Did the 6 examples (see Menu of Models) inform or inspire you? Which ones might work in your setting? Who would you ask to offer some assistance in doing planning?

Chapter 5. Budgets and Balance Sheets: Deeply Doctrinal Documents

- Are you satisfied with present budgeting and fiscal policies and practices? What practices need improvement? Which policies need to be changed or new ones developed?
- Talk with others in your organization about the health of your financial system's
 - transparency
 - clear authority of roles and responsibilities
 - checks and balances
 - budget development
- What would the members of your organization say about the financial reporting? Clear? Snow job? Hiding something? Timely? Informative? Exciting?
- What could be done to interpret financial work as ministry and support those who do it in your ministry setting?

Chapter 6. Raising the Resources: Theology Talks and Money Matters!

- Describe your theology of stewardship. Is it widely shared within the congregation/organization? What is your strategy for ongoing education?
- Are you personally comfortable speaking about money, both publicly (in sermons, e.g.) and privately with individuals? If not, can you grow more comfortable in a ministry of stewardship, or do you need to enlist others, especially for an “ask”?
- In your best judgment, does your organization have a holistic approach to fund-raising? What components are missing and how might they be developed?

Chapter 7. Oversight (Being CEO) is a Worthy Calling

- If your role includes “being CEO,” are you comfortable in it? If not, why not and what steps might be taken to embrace your call to administrative leadership?
- Which dimensions of personnel-related work do you most enjoy and which do you dread? Who might help and support you in the more challenging aspects?
- In each case, complete the open sentence:
 - When I think of office administration . . .
 - As I approach a meeting . . .

- For our ministry, volunteers . . .

Chapter 8. Communication: Ministry Means Messaging

- How would you describe Jesus' approach to communication? That of leaders in the early Church? If as Marshall McLuhan suggested, "the medium is the message," what messages are conveyed as you utilize various media?
- In what media do you personally feel most comfortable seeking to convey a message? What continuing education experience might enable you to become an even more effective communicator?
- Do you have in place policies for staff and volunteers with regard to electronic media? Is a crisis communication plan in place? Have you identified good communicators who can be public representatives?
- Ponder alone or discuss with others your perspectives and feelings about "the media." How have or might you develop positive relationships with local reporters and others who can assist you in being a "public theologian"?

Chapter 9. Ministry Teams: Teeming with Talent

- Have you ever been on a team which produced results greater than the sum of the individual talents? If not do you know of one? What made this team so effective?
- Are you comfortable with the contributions made by teams in your organization? Do governance groups work well together? What types of teams do you have and what can be done to improve their functioning? Are new teams needed and who will start them?
- The chapter describes how a new learning team was started in a national church organization. If you were starting a new team, what steps would you take?

Chapter 10. External Relationships: Loving Thy Institutional Neighbor

- How long is your reach? In other words is your institutional reach appropriate to your mission? Do you play it safe circling the wagons or reach out with boldness and courage?
- What would representatives of your community say about your organization? About you?
- Four ways to improve external relationships are doing an attitude check, mapping the environment, interpretation to members about the wider context, and involvement in the wider setting of your organization. Which of these needs to be strengthened and how can it be done?
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer described the "place of responsibility" for a Christian and Christian institution as loving the neighbor near and far. Who are your neighbors at hand? Who are your neighbors far away? How are they being loved and served?

Chapter 11. When Conflict Comes Calling

- Ponder for a moment the most difficult conflict situation in which you personally have been involved in recent years? What were its nature, type, intensity and duration? What was your role and how did you feel in the midst of conflict? What did you learn about yourself and your organization from the experience?
- How would you describe your support system? Respond to the following: In the midst of a deeply conflicted situation, I would feel most comfortable approaching _____ for support and assistance.
- As you think about the future in your ministry, what might be most likely to provoke conflict? Are there areas of stagnation where some “creative conflict” might get things moving in a positive direction? How and by whom might it be instigated so as to remain creative and not destructive?

Chapter 12. Life under Law: Navigating Legal Issues in Ministry

- What are those areas in your present calling where you feel least equipped to navigate the “boundary waters”? Have you identified where to turn when you need assistance?
- If asked about your understanding of confidentiality, what would be your “elevator speech” or “church door” version?
- Are you comfortable with your congregation’s or organization’s approach to risk management? Are policies and good practices in place that guarantee the maximum degree of safety and well-being for all touched by your ministry?

Afterword. The Administrator as Person

- Given the unruly nature of administration and the fading character of life (including organizational), significant effort is called forth “to ride time to the end”. How do you rate your level of effort? High, low, or medium? How would you go about changing it if you are not satisfied?
- The appendix lists eight questions, the answers to which are designed to increase self-awareness. After you answer these questions, ask someone who knows you and will be honest to say how she or he thinks you answered them. An important moment for feedback should happen.
- In what ways do you learn—reading, speaking or writing? What do you like and not like about your way to learn?
- The companion of self-awareness is self-deception. One way self-deception manifests itself in administration is administrating well something that does not contribute to the greater good of church and society. What is the greater good you serve as administrator?