

Discipleship: An Orthodox Christian Perspective for Leaders

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Agenda

- Challenges to all parishes
- Stability and Unity
- Leader as disciple
- Handling change
- Leadership and EQ





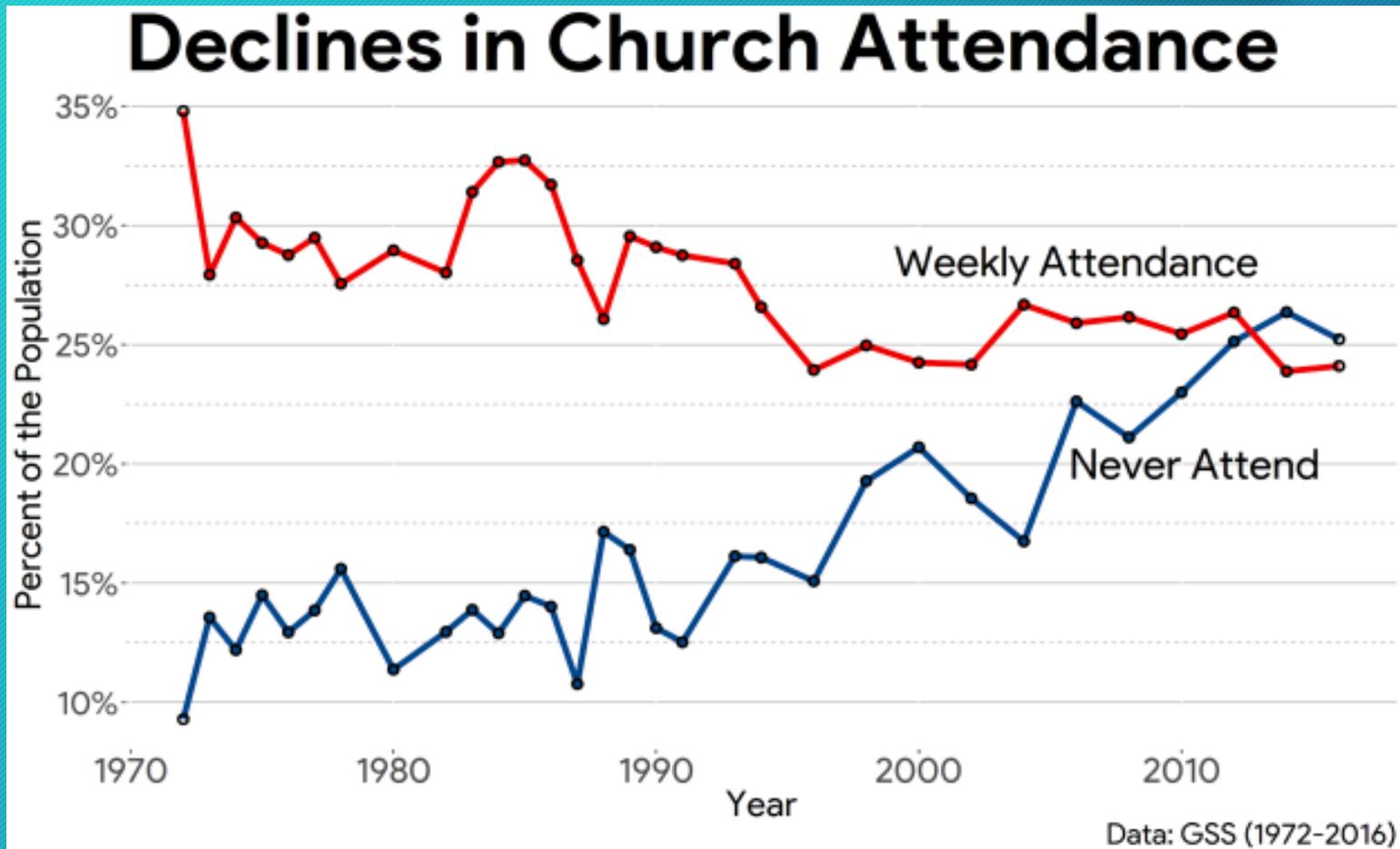


House Built on the Rock

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a **wise man who built his house on the rock**: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and **it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.**

But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a **foolish man who built his house on the sand**: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and **it fell. And great was its fall. (Mt 7:24-27)**

The Storm is Here



Stability

- What will help to make our churches “storm proof”?
 - Honest evaluation
 - Clear mission/vision
 - Attainable and stretch goals
 - Dynamic outreach
 - **Unity in the Body**
 - **Trusted leadership**

The Importance of Unity

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Eph 4:1-6)

Unity is the Overarching Principle

- Unity in the body
- Unity among the leaders
- Unity is not uniformity, it is unity of **mission** and **vision**

Mission/Vision

- Every parish should have a mission statement
 - Clear
 - Concise
 - Memorable

Trusted Leadership

- The key to stable parishes is trusted leadership
- Leaders include clergy and laity in proper Orthodox order
- Leaders have a responsibility to be fully committed to Christian discipleship
 - To be a disciple
 - To make disciples
- Discipleship is another principle around which unity in the parish is built

The Principles of Discipleship

- Being a disciple is at the heart of the Christian experience.
 - “Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
Amen. (*Mt 28:19-20*)

The Principles of Discipleship

- Discipleship is obedience to the Faith.
 - Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (*Phil 2:12-13*)

The Principles of Discipleship

- Discipleship is conforming to the image of Christ.
 - But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you... (*Gal 4:18-19*)
 - And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (*Rom 8:28-29*)

Disciples are Given Growth

- Disciples are obedient to God but know that He gives the growth.
 - So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. (*1 Cor 3:17*)

Parishioner or Disciple?

Parishioner	Disciple
Membership	Commitment
Maintenance	Change
Talk	Listen
Already achieved	Always learning
Asking/Taking	Giving
Looking back	Looking forward
Keeps to self	Shares with others

Leaders are Disciples of The Leader

- Looking constantly to Christ to learn the truth
- Doing all things to glorify God
- Understand the primary mission of the Church
- Trusting in God's will in all things
- Learning continually to experience the depth of the wisdom of Christ
- Growing from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18) changing/transforming (personally and the parish)

The Importance of Change

- Change is at the heart of any parish's life
- It must be conceived
 - carefully
 - cautiously
- It must be introduced
 - transparently
 - purposefully
- It must be justified
 - beneficially

Introducing Change

- Requires time for assessment
- What needs to be changed?
- What is the goal of the change? What will the change accomplish?
- Who are supporters of change?
- Who are the opponents?
- What is motivating the change?

Motivating Change

- Trust is the key
- Change should be a collective effort
- Members must believe that change will enhance the parish
 - It is not a personal agenda
- They must believe it is an attainable goal
- Keep focus on the goal
- Report on progress and challenges

Changing Attitudes

- Who in that “group” is reasonable and can mediate?
- Get to the core of the issue. What are the reasons for resistance. Talk, don't accuse.
- Opponents minds can change
- They are motivated by success
- Be patient. This takes years.

Leadership

- It is imperative to work together on any goals. Clergy and parish council together provides the leadership for future stability and growth.
- Leaders must model those qualities which make them stand out as exemplary Christians and members of the Body of Christ in the local community.

Parish Council Standards/Profile

- Supports the vision
- Enables change
- Articulates challenges and goals
- Personally committed to Christ
- Energetic worker
- Exemplary financial supporter
- Advocates for pastoral leadership
- **Resolves peacefully**
- **Emotionally intelligent**

EQ: Emotional Intelligence

- IQ can't change
- EQ can (and must) develop
 - Emotional Intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.
 - Two relationships: self and others
 - Two perceptions: self and others

EQ: Four Core Skills



Leadership and EQ

- Leaders must present themselves to others in an increasingly complex environment
- Leaders should have an **awareness of themselves** that is a reflection of their spiritual efforts and development and **manage themselves** accordingly
- Leaders should be **aware of others and how they are perceived** and should **manage those relationships** accordingly
- Leaders should reflect spiritual maturity, the hallmark of a seasoned disciple of Christ

Spiritual Maturity

- “Acquire the Spirit of Peace and around you thousands will be saved.” (St Seraphim of Sarov)



Emotional Intelligence: Recognizing the Image of God in Us and Others

Self Awareness

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be **filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...** (*Col 1:9*)

Self Management

But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.** Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have **crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (*Gal 5:22-25*)

Social Awareness

The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And **you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.**' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**' There is no other commandment greater than these. (*Mk 12:29-31*)

Relationship Management

You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over Yet **it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.** For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (*Mk 10:42-45*)

Review

- Every parish has challenges, but we must address them systematically and faithfully
- Stability is brought into a parish when there is unity of mission and vision
- Orthodox Christian leaders should be serious disciples of Christ to be effective
- Handling change effectively is the key to progress in the parish
- Church leaders must display a sense of mature emotional intelligence to relate to others properly

Final Thoughts

- Parishes can be renewed, but it requires leadership and vision.
- Know what the vision is and be able to articulate it.
- You **must** love *these* people. Love everyone.
- Some people will leave. Let them go.
- Pray for your enemies and work closely with them.
- Pray to God earnestly for what your parish needs.
- Pay attention to the pulse of your parish.
- Preach on the themes that are most necessary to hear.
- Do what you can, and don't lose hope.

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