



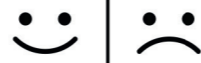
## HANDLING CHANGE

Hundreds of thousands of churches around the world have split when the leadership wanted to make serious changes. Years ago, I was at a key church in Copenhagen where 75% of the people left when changes were made. After the changes, the church did much better and many non-Christians found the Lord. It is tragic that churches split over John MacArthur's teaching or Willow Creeks' teachings, to list only two. There are whole books written about abusive leadership, or leaders being abused! Whole new church denominations are started through splits over doctrine, or mission agencies over methodologies which led me to write about "messiology". Why would God who made every snowflake or finger print different want us to all think and sound the same?

**Speaking in tongues must be the global leader for splitting churches...**



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## THE TENDENCY TO BE NEGATIVE

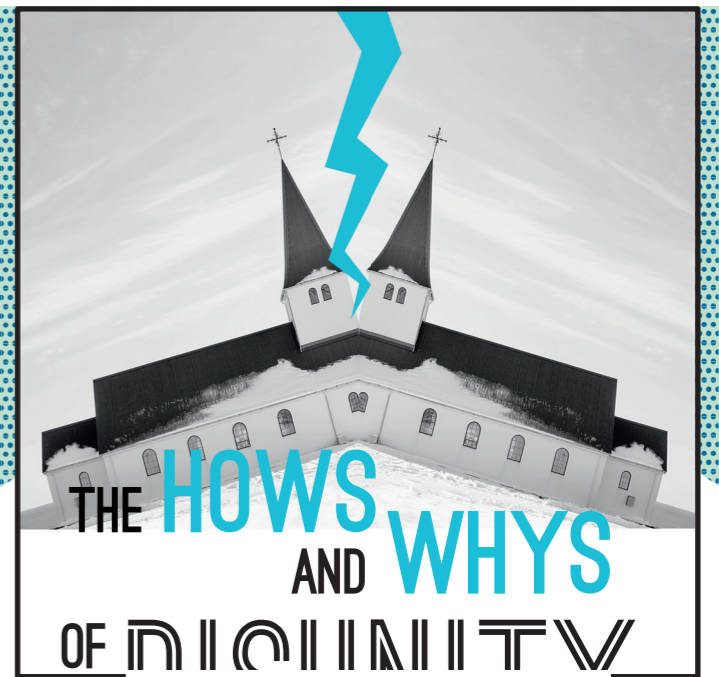
Some people, for whatever reasons, always seem negative. Be careful to discern such persons, and resist taking them on staff, even if some team members may want them. Realize some who started well, can get so confused, or grieved because God didn't answer their prayers, that they lose their biblical faith. That has happened in OM, and nearly all agencies have experienced Bible school and seminary graduates 'turning back'.

*Some people seem unhappy no matter what.*

Your co-worker might be a more positive and forgiving person, but what about his/her spouse? Many a spouse has brought division between their husband/wife and their direct leader. So often, human pride is in the middle of it. We need to ask ourselves, "How easy is it for people to correct me or exhort me?" I dare people to read Ken Penman's almost unknown book about pride<sup>7</sup>.

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## THE HOWS AND WHYS OF DISUNITY

by George Verwer

1. *See Messiology* by George Verwer. ISBN-13: 978-0802414854
2. *Calvary Road* by Roy Hession. ISBN-13: 978-14444455663
3. *Bite and Devour* by Alexander Strauch. ISBN-13: 978-0936083315
4. *Leading With Love* by Alexander Strauch. ISBN-13: 978-0936083216
5. *Revolution of Love* by George Verwer. ISBN-13: 978-1850780458
6. *Literature Evangelism* by George Verwer. ISBN-13: 978-1884543258
7. *Pride or Praise?* by Kenneth Penman. ISBN-13: 978-1591602576

For 60 years, I have seen Christians turn against their leaders. When I was a 'baby' Christian, two of the men who supported me the most, turned against their pastor and wanted him out. My mind was semi-soured against that pastor, but I kept loving him. He became a lifetime picture of 'messiology'<sup>1</sup>. We were still friends as he approached 90, and God was still using him. He had many weaknesses and failures; yet, he helped start a number of churches. One of those churches has supported Drena and me for over 40 years.

**Through six decades of following Christ and serving in ministry leadership, I have discerned eight causes of disunity and its consequences:**



# 1 OUR HUMAN SINFULNESS

Our human sinfulness, combined with the enemy attacks outlined in Eph. 6:10-20, must be recognised as the root sources that produce both disunity and its consequences.



# THE GRIP OF POVERTY



# 4

We cannot comprehend, if we have not been there, the fear that poverty brings. Many people are given low-paying jobs in Christian organizations. The backbone of many large humanitarian agencies is built on that. Some pay more than others, and their senior people get much more. Yet God has used these movements. When people are fired, unless they are given a 'golden handshake' (which often binds them to not speak negatively about the agency), they complain, gossip, and even threaten litigation. Some will say they have been mistreated, whether true or not. Of the hundreds of agencies with whom I have had contact, almost all have suffered some form of slander or defamation.

People will strike for more money regardless of whether the entire organisation is brought into bankruptcy

Local churches are equally vulnerable. People will strike for more money regardless of whether the entire organisation is brought into bankruptcy, costing everyone their job. Lawyers get involved and even unscrupulous outsiders or non-believers try to profit from it all. Fearful and desperate people become vulnerable and do sinful and foolish things, often ending in a worse situation for all parties. Marriages are not immune from this strain. On the other hand, there have been thousands of people who have been helped down life's road, because some Christian agency gave them their first job, even if the pay was low.

# 5 THE GRIP OF CULTURE



We are all impacted by our culture especially in the first ten years of life. Getting people to submit to a leader from a different culture, who will probably make cultural mistakes, is very difficult. When something goes wrong, misunderstanding and hurt are not far behind.

*In some cultures, telling a lie is not considered that wrong.*

I recently read an article in a well-known, acceptable newspaper on the importance of lying effectively! This plays havoc in Christian ministry. Soon people don't know whom to trust.

Finding the truth in cross-cultural situations can be difficult. This really upsets the 'total truth/total answer' guys, especially when mixed with hardball legalism and super-spirituality. Add in "God always answers prayer; God always heals and delivers", and you have a mess that no one is going to resolve without a lot of pain... and who wants pain?



# 6 THE BLAME GAME

It's hard for us humans to see our own faults, let alone our blind spots. How hard it is, even as a leader, to correct most people! Those corrected often turn on you, blaming you or pointing out some fault in your own life. Or they look for someone else to blame—quite often the CEO. With a strong enough case and the right people on board, the CEO (or senior pastor, team leader or department head) may soon lose his job. This would be unnecessary if the exhorted person had the humility to admit his mistake or take the correction in the first place, even if the complaint against him were not 100% accurate.

*How hard it is, even as a leader, to correct most people! Those corrected often turn on you, blaming you or pointing out some fault in your own life.*

I feel our own movement was better off when everyone had to read *Calvary Road*<sup>2</sup> which deals with confessing faults, humbling ourselves, and learning to be broken. This message was originally part of our mission's DNA. I am not sure how much of that remains. Other books like *Bite and Devour*<sup>3</sup> and *Leading with Love*<sup>4</sup> carry a similar theme. My own books convey this message, especially *Revolution of Love*<sup>5</sup>. Even my first book, *Literature Evangelism*<sup>6</sup> had a key chapter about loving one another.



# STRONG-MINDED LEADERS

Strong-minded leaders naturally do not stick together or work well together. Doctrine is often more critical than we realise. I lost one of my best friends in the early days of OM who felt I was not charismatic enough. How many tens of thousands of splits and destroyed relationships have been over that one issue? Strong-minded, focused leaders who accomplish great things are often impatient, and the devil uses that.

# THE GRIP OF MONEY

People are quick to criticise if a leader receives more money than them. Though this is normal in secular work, people become extreme on the 'not fair tangent' which leads to hurt, confusion...and a mess. The story of people upset over money issues in OM history has never been told, but neither have the stories of mega-generosity and people going the extra mile. Women can be unhappy with their husband's income even though he might be content. The complexity and potential for disunity in this is off the charts. It seems impossible for people not to get hurt; some even threaten to go to court to get what they want. The gossip released during these tough situations only increases disunity.

