

Cause – Corporation – Community

February 2012 – 330. That's the number placarded on the wall of the left field pavilion at Dodger Stadium. And that's the number that served repeatedly as the Olson family 'vision test'.

You see, growing up as a young boy in a family that is visually-challenged, the question was never, WILL I need glasses? It was simply a matter of WHEN.

I remember the day. I was comfortably situated in my Chavez Ravine box seat, 23 rows up from first base, working on a Mountain Dew and a Dodger dog slathered with ketchup (the Carnation chocolate malt would follow soon), when my dad asked me if I could read the numbers on the left field wall. As I strained and squinted two things crossed my mind: who's hiding the binoculars and why didn't I have that number memorized?! The next day I found my little back-end stuffed into Dr. Kleckner's ophthalmology chair to assess the damage. The inevitable outcome meant that my driver's license would read NEEDS CORRECTIVE LENSES for the next four decades of my life (until LASIK came along!).

In leadership, what we SEE is of vital importance. As leaders, every one of us, knowingly or not, sport a set of corrective lenses through which they see our leadership task.

For a moment, I want to place before you a way of seeing your leadership responsibility—a construct that is particularly helpful within the context of a Christian organization. (FYI: this construct is not original to me; it was passed along to me third-hand years ago, so if you know the origin, give me a shout!)

Here's the construct. It is essential that leaders see their organization in three dimensions: CAUSE—CORPORATION—COMMUNITY.

CAUSE is the mission piece. It's the purpose, the reason to exist. In the local church, the mission is the Great Commission—the assignment given by Jesus Christ in His final instructions to “make disciples (followers) of all nations”.

CORPORATION is the organizational piece. It's the org charts, the policies, the structures. The organizational piece is about doing “all things decently and in order”.

COMMUNITY is the relational piece. It's about the people. In the local church, we are community, family, brothers, and sisters. Paul the Apostle puts it this way: “We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.”

In many ways, the art of leadership is keeping all of these in BALANCE. (And if you've been around

the leadership block a time or two, you know that is easier said than done).

Currently, the church at which I serve is going through a season of reorganization. Long story short, over the past months, we have given attention to clarifying more closely our CAUSE, our mission. With a greater clarity of our cause, we then focused in on the CORPORATION piece by restructuring ourselves to be more fully aligned with our cause.

But one of the most important parts of this reorganization has been the COMMUNITY piece. That's why it's the outer circle in the diagram—it encompasses not only what we do, but HOW we do it.

When leaders create an atmosphere of care and concern, hope and vision flourish.

—Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath

For instance, were those most affected by the reorganization brought into the conversation as soon as they could be? When possible, were people invited into a dialogue about the changes that were taking place? Was the communication clear? Was it timely? Did people feel honored and valued?

After a few decades of local church ministry, truth be told, I'd love to have some mulligans, some do-overs—a chance to re-do not only some decisions, but more importantly HOW those decisions were implemented.

But while life and leadership rarely offer us “do-overs”, they do offer us a generous portion of “look-aheads”—the opportunity to plan, to pray, and to think in advance about how to find that Christ-honoring balance of CAUSE, CORPORATION, and COMMUNITY.

I'm grateful for “look-aheads”. How about you?

Lord, do Your work in our lives. Grow us up into leaders who understand the delicate balance required of those who choose to lead with their lives.