

By the Same Authors . . .

*The Art of Management for Christian Leaders*

*Strategy for Living*

*Strategy for Leadership*

# **The Christian Executive**

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a practical  
reference for;

- Christians in  
Management Positions
- Leaders of Christian  
Organizations
- Christian Educators
- Pastors and Other  
Christian Workers

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Edward R. Dayton**



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## THE CHRISTIAN EXECUTIVE

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going. Doubts will come. In a world where the chances of things going wrong far exceed the likelihood of things going right, we can easily resign ourselves to failure. That is why we must continually reaffirm our purpose.

### Prayer

Who can explain it? We have direct access to the Maker of the universe. He has gone before and follows behind. Call on him. Counsel with him. In his Word, God continually invites us into his presence: "Call unto me. . . ."; "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (Jer. 33: 3; 1 John 2: 1). God's way of working is in answer to believing prayer!

### Believe

Ours is the God who is *for* us! He is not playing games. Daily trust your life to him. "The steps of a good man [woman] are ordered by the Lord" (Ps. 37: 23 KJV). One of us has Psalm 32: 8 as his life verse: "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you." Try it; it works!

### For Further Reading

A book we often recommend for young people starting out in their careers is *What Color Is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles. The thrust of this book is that the best way to find the right job is to research the one you want and then go after a specific job. Read the book—it's very helpful.

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# When It's Time to Retire

ONE OF THE FACTS OF LIFE in the Western world is retirement—the idea that at some particular time or age a person should leave his or her vocational or organizational responsibilities and "retire." Fifty years ago many people looked upon retirement as one of the goals of life. At the time it was seen as a just reward for a long and hard career. Visions of quiet days idled away by gentle streams or pleasant vistas were seen as very alluring.

Now the reality of senior citizenship has set in. In 1977, 9.7 percent of the U.S. population was over 65. Senior citizens are now recognizing that they are the largest "minority" in the country. Not all of them are pleased with the way they are being treated.

Whether you are beginning to contemplate retirement yourself, or whether you are a Christian executive who needs to help other people prepare for retirement, there is much more to the process than at first meets the eye. What you might have considered as primarily a question of finances or retirement plans turns out to be one of life's greatest transitions for many people.

We would like to consider retirement from the perspective of its impact on the individual and steps we might take to make the transition an effective one.

All of our advertising keeps bombarding us with the idea that to be young is good and to be old is bad. If the same form of advertising was applied to the idea that to be white is good and to be black is bad, civil rights advocates would rise up in indig-



nation all over the country. Perhaps one day the Gray Panthers will have their way with the media! Meanwhile, better face it, the emphasis on youth is probably not going to go away very soon.

Our society continually tries to brainwash itself to avoid the fact of death. Rather than death being viewed as a final climax to the productive life and an entrance into the presence of the King, death is seen as something to be avoided and glossed over. Old people are viewed as a sign of approaching death. Many people avoid them.<sup>1</sup>

We are just now beginning to realize that our transportation systems and our service industries are geared to younger people. Senior groups are beginning effective campaigns to change this.

### The Organizational Security Blanket

Few of us recognize the sizeable feeling of security we gain from working within an organization.

First, it gives us a sense of place. We know who we are. We know where we fit. Have you ever noticed how people tend to introduce you? "I'd like you to meet Mr. Brown. He's with Christian Life International."

Second, it gives us leverage in the world. The organization will stand behind us in terms of credit ratings, social support (such things as life insurance and other fringe benefits), and in a host of other ways which we might never think of (passes to certain functions, an ability to travel, expense accounts, and so forth). When was the last time you combined a business meeting or trip with a social event?

Third, organizations give us a goal orientation. We share a common task with others in which we have a common responsibility and for which we feel a common drive. This gives us something to look forward to, as well as a feeling of accomplishment.

Fourth, a role in an organization gives us prestige, not only with our neighbors, but with ourselves. It's nice to know this building, this project, these people are what they are because of what we have been able to do (even with the Lord's help!).

Fifth, organizations give us an opportunity to help others, to feel responsible, to feel that we are needed.

<sup>1</sup> In his book, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973), Ernest Becker does an excellent job of demonstrating that most of life's actions center around denial of our mortality.

Sixth, organizations permit us to relate as professionals to others. A pastor will naturally join a pastoral association. The Christian executive will look to others in a similar field, people with whom he/she can exchange information or with whom he/she may join a technical society.

The day you retire from an organization many of these things are removed. Now you are one individual "against the world." Your mobility may be greatly reduced, your sense of direction may be gone. Your feeling of self-worth may be greatly diminished.

### Be Prepared

How do we cope with such a radical change? The first thing to do is to recognize that it does lie ahead. Be prepared.

In many ways, preparing for retirement is much like preparing to enter a new business. This is particularly true for the individual who has worked as part of a large organization. There are a whole list of questions to be faced:

1. What will you do for the remaining years of your life?
2. Where will you live?
3. What will be your relationships with your children?
4. What kind of environment should you be in?
5. What kind of life style would you like to have?
6. What kind of life style will you probably be forced to have?
- What will be your standard of living?
7. Can it (retirement) be postponed?
8. Can it be hastened?

Notice how many of these questions are similar to those we asked in the chapter, "You and Your Job." Both are an attempt to anticipate the kind of future we would like to have, to take the steps that will move us in that direction.

### Have a Goal!

One of the most deadly enemies of life is a lack of purpose. Too many people set a goal to *begin* retirement, but no goal as to what they will accomplish or become as a result of retirement. Goals are powerful motivators. At 63 we need goals for 70. At 68 we need goals for 75.

Is there a book that you've always wanted to write? By beginning to gather background information on it and putting it



aside while you're yet an active member of an organization, you will have a head start when you finally have the time to do the writing. Is there a new skill that you wanted to acquire one day "when you had the time"? Start doing research now on what schools might be available. You are going to be a different person than you are now. Although in many ways you are going to have physical limitations you did not have when you were younger, in other ways you will have experiences and capabilities to make you much more "valuable." Where do all of these changes fit?

### Solutions

*View this as a career change.* In the same way that you would investigate your potential role in a new organization, investigate this new role you're going to play in society.

*Consider what God has made you,* what he has allowed you to become. If, as a Christian, you view your chief purpose to bring glory to him, what is it he has taught you about yourself, others, and the world, that you might now use in some new and fresh way?

*Analyze your life style* and standard of living; what is there about your present life style sustained by the fact that you work for an organization? What part of it will have to change? What are your likes and dislikes? Perhaps you'll discover that there are a number of penalties to working in your present situation which may disappear when you retire. Perhaps you will have new interests. You may want to consider visiting the local university to take something like the Strong Aptitude Test which would give you some additional insight into things you would really like to do.

*Plan financially.* Many life insurance companies will help you work through an analysis of your situation and then give you a picture of the possibilities of having the kind of future *financially* you would like to have. Their objective, of course, is to sell life insurance, but it is worth the effort to begin to ask yourself some questions as to the level of income you expect to live on and whether any retirement plan that your organization has, plus social security, plus whatever other financial resources you have are going to be adequate. Investigate the many savings plans and retirement accounts available for self-employed people or for wives, plans that help you to postpone income tax costs until you are in a lower tax bracket.

This may also have something to say about your learning to be a manager of money. It's surprising how many of us who have been working on a salary all of our lives have really become used to letting our salaries control our expenses. Even men and women who do an excellent job of managing the finances of their companies often are poor personal finance managers. Perhaps you need to get some outside consulting help here.

*Plan for it* just as you would plan for entering your own business, for in one sense that is what you're doing. One solution many people have found worthwhile is to launch their own business. Perhaps there is a business you can start now, even while you are still working for the organization from which you will retire. This should be openly discussed by all concerned.

*Try to "test it out"* or prepare for it before it happens. Both the individual and the organization should consider ways of gradual transition rather than an abrupt change. For example, if you were going to get involved in your own business, perhaps you should gain your organization's permission (if needed) to start experimenting with a business like this now. Most businesses, crafts or hobbies have their own newsletters and journals. Go to the local library and find out what they are and then start subscribing to them.

*Build bridges for the future* by planning how the skills you now have and will have in the future may be used by others. Take some of the aptitude tests and other tests available to help you discover your particular talents and what you like to do. You may be amazed at the possibilities of a whole new career. Don't overlook the possibility of doing consulting for other organizations similar to yours. This could be accomplished either by short-term visits or with perhaps two to three months spent as an enabler or facilitator. The latter role is particularly useful in assisting other local church congregations.

*Build up contacts and friendships* for the type of life you are going to lead. If you are thinking of moving into a retirement community, develop friendships with people living in such places. Find out the pros and cons. If you are a person who has always enjoyed being with people younger than yourself, perhaps you will find it distressing to join the ranks of "senior citizens." On the other hand, many people enjoy the company of people their own age. Some people advocate moving into a retirement com-



munity even before one retires so that one can begin to establish lasting friendships. Many times people who postpone leaving the home they had lived in for many years find it increasingly difficult as the years go by.

### The Advantages of Age

Old age has a lot of things going for it: wisdom about the world and how things work, a broad knowledge of its different aspects, the "experience" of having made mistakes, a greater tolerance for others which results in a greater ability to love and understand. Many people become more patient as they grow older, although it is a well-known phenomenon that as we approach the end of life, we tend to exhibit many of the personality traits we may have covered up during early and mid-life.

Weigh the advantages of advancing years. Your lifetime of experience may be exactly what's needed to move another person along the road of increased effectiveness.

### The Role of the Christian Organization

Most Christians do respect the wisdom that comes with years, so at least we have some advantage over the non-Christian. However, as a Christian executive responsible for people who are approaching retirement in your organization, how much can be done to pave the way, so that "retirement" becomes a milestone along the way and not the entrance to nonpersonhood?

*First*, and most obvious, is the need for assistance in financial planning. An organization can take the lead in helping its staff think through their financial situations and to the extent that is possible, provide them with a retirement plan to meet their needs. It is surprising how many Christian organizations have retirement plans about which the employee can only learn with a great deal of digging. Any retirement plan should give the staff member a yearly report on his or her anticipated income at the time of retirement.

*Second*, provide awareness of the problems of retirement. It is all too easy to lull ourselves to sleep by imagining how great it's going to be not to *have* to work, rather than to realize that work is at the very core of life.

*Third*, consider retirement education, starting no later than five years before the mandatory age for retirement within your or-

ganization. This might take the form of encouraging staff members to take applicable courses in nearby schools, to provide them with literature from some of the senior citizens' societies like the American Association of Retired Persons.

*Fourth*, consider ways of continuing to employ key people who have passed the mandatory retirement age. There are a number of ways to do this. Many seminars renew the contract with their faculty on a year-by-year basis. Others find new consultative assignments for their retirees, many times rehiring the individual as a consultant. If it fits in with the plans of the employee, many times there will be specific assignments he/she can continue to do on a part-time basis.

*Fifth*, consider whether mandatory retirement is really to the advantage of your organization. There is a good deal of discussion about this subject, and we realize that there are many pros and cons. Some people feel that older people need to be moved along to make room for younger people. Contrariwise, a growing organization often needs all the mature leadership it can find.

*Sixth*, make sure you are not building a financial trap for your staff in the name of Christian commitment. For example, most churches now realize that by giving their pastor a manse, they have kept him or her from accumulating equity in a home for retirement years. If low salaries are part and parcel of your organizational structure, then perhaps you need to consider a retirement program that provides an unusually high percentage of retirement income.

### For Further Reading

Paul Tournier's *Learn to Grow Old* is very helpful.

See your local library for the wide range of books written on things you can do after you retire.