Management-Controlling Principles
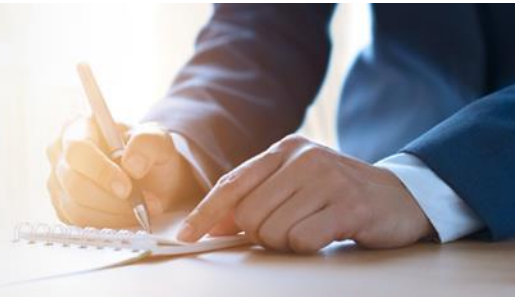
One definition of management controlling is, "the work we engage in to check work in progress and complete it." This is one area of Christian work that perplexes me greatly. How have we come to assume that we can be thrown in together as a group of individuals with the view of accomplishing common goals without someone assuming the responsibility for checking and coordinating the work in progress? But often no one does. In our types of organizations, we come up with a whole series of people, it can be 50 or 125, allegedly banded together and moving toward an objective like the evangelization of a community and the planting of the church in that area. Yet, in the final outworking, instead of moving in union and harmony, the tendency is for each individual to follow the path of his or her own inclination. Dedicated persons go in all kinds of directions with goals that may be similar but are seldom coordinated.

The point of management controlling is, once the goal has been identified, once the relationships have been determined, once the work has been assigned, once the decision-making power or authority has been clearly defined, to ensure that we all go in one direction and work in harmony. No one is more aware of the problems of control than I am, yet I still presume to emphasize that the problem can be overcome. Do not assume that your organization is so different, that everyone is just simply too individualistic. We can expect to achieve this kind of union toward our objective. It can be done.

Management control must be implemented to accomplish our goal. How shall we describe missions and churches, generally? We have a manager at the top, frequently insecure and very unsure of what a manager is supposed to do. Often the person is so totally oblivious of the value of management controlling, that he or she simply assumes or hopes that everyone will move toward the objective when a little pressure is exerted and the work is committed to God in prayer. Frequently, when objectives are not being accomplished, but while there is work being done and signs of activity are evident, those in positions of leadership do not take any action. But, as the situation deteriorates and worsens, leaders begin to be concerned. They begin to pray. They should go further and implement management control. An individual responsible for the group should begin to check the work in progress against the established performance standards.

I think we harm our Christian workers when we defer to their commands to be individualists and let them wander all over the place without reining them in tight, controlling their activities and saying, "Here is the direction we are going. We are trying to accomplish this. Here is your role. Now play that role." We all have come into the Lord's work because of the strong goal

orientation. Individualism emerges after we are in the group, not before. It is not the result of what we were before we got into the group. We came into the group because we wanted to move in union with other persons toward the accomplishment of the goal. What is the problem? The problem is leadership. There usually is not a goal-oriented leader at the top who gives the order and says, "We are going to do this. Here is your role." Eventually the leader may have to go back and say, "Excuse me, Joe, we blundered on the project. I am awfully sorry. Now let us try again and go toward this goal." But this seldom happens. Some of you may come from highly goal-oriented missions where there is adequate management pressure at the top to move people in unison, but generally speaking this is not so.

We must always respect people as human beings, not pieces of machinery, not just inanimate objects that you place in a certain spot and say, "Do this," and they do it. No, these are human beings, but they are human beings who want to accomplish a goal.

Occasionally you will meet a Christian worker who does not want to accomplish anything. Sometimes you will have to remove that person from the pursuit of this goal and send him or her home. If a man embezzled $60,000, you would remove him. If a man became involved in heresy, you would ship him off. But people can wander around ineffectively on the field, and we do not do anything about it. I want to insist that it is not their fault. It is the leader's fault; or maybe we should say, it is the people at the top.

So many things begin to merge here and come to the fore: the goal orientation, organization, the job description, communications, establishing and maintaining human inter-relationships, the authority by which we manage. However, the persons who are wandering aimlessly around are not to blame. Let us remember that the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are called *sheep,* and the continuing need of any sheep is a shepherd. We recognize this spiritually and we appoint undershepherds, but this is equally important in the practical outworkings of our lives.

Management controlling is concerned with ineffective and vague leadership. Admittedly, the longer the organization has been inexistence, the more difficulties we are going to have. Leadership can change! But with great effort. Still we can change, provided we are willing to pay the price and the leaders are sufficiently goal oriented and courageous.