Felix Muchimba

When Leadership Is Messy



WEA
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

World of Theology Series 33

"Like most leaders, I have read many books on leadership. So, is this just another good to have leadership book? I would suggest absolutely not! This book tackles a number of core issues such as complexity, conflict, money, sex and power and so much more. I have not come across many books being courageous enough to tackle difficult topics such as the pain of leadership. Though a global book, it is firmly embedded in an African perspective and has practical stories that most of us would be able to relate to. Felix has done the African Continent proud by producing an exceptional book. I certainly will be doing everything I can to promote this book! Believe me, you will not be disappointed!"

Peter Tarantal
Associate International Director Operation Mobilsation
Chair: Majority World Christian Leaders Conversation
Advisor to the leadership of the Movement for African National Initiatives

"Reading the leadership book by Dr. Felix Muchimba one gets cultivated to finish it before doing anything else. It is filled with leadership nuggets that are so valuable both for the seasoned leader as well as for the ones desiring to learn the art of leadership. From the opening chapter that starts with a live discussion of why pain is a part of leadership to the concept of finishing well – wow, and the in-between discourse like lessons on young people in leadership, spiritual abuse to effective leadership, Dr. Muchimba has something here! Then before one could breathe out, six easy to read chapters on very interesting subjects on leadership welcomes one to read on: founder's syndrome, falling out, individual spiritual deficiency to girls (sex), gold (money) and glory (power) in leadership. Above all that important nugget of rest in leadership – who want to rest?

The lessons are made easy by life changing examples and the summary points at the end of each chapter, making it easy for a home group/Bible Study fellowship discussion. Also, could be useful for leadership training.

I have already learnt a lot from this book and do endorse it to all those who desire to sharpen their leadership tools in more than one way."

Prof. Mumo Kisau
Vice Chancellor, Scott Christian University, Kenya

"A good leader is ever present, touching, motivating, talking, and checking, facilitating, training, and preparing". Reading this quote by Dr. Felix Muchimba may make some leaders want to place this book on a shelf never to be read. The author, Dr. Muchimba, is a leader who has "been there, done that". The reader will soon discover that this book on leadership shatters the false belief that leadership is simply cool stuff. It is not only didactic but very practical and biblical.

The many African proverbs used in this book are very relevant for Africans who aspire to lead in the church, as well as those presently charged with such positions. His wide international travels and association with leaders in a variety of organizations and countries permit him to deal with issues that allow the reader to understand different cultures, respectfully embrace the wisdom of the seniors and facilitate a clear path for the strength and gift of the aspiring youth.

It is obvious that Dr. Muchimba gleaned much from sitting at the feet of the greatest teacher, Jesus. This is demonstrated by the sound doctrines to which he referenced from the Holy Bible.

Each chapter in this book can well stand on its own, but you will surely recognize the importance of prayerfully gleaning the dynamics of servant leadership as presented throughout the entire book.

This book is a must read and highly recommended for leaders in the assemblies and beyond."

Edward Richardson
Commended Evangelist and Missionary, Bermuda

"Leadership is fundamental for the growth of both the church of God and the people of God. Felix Muchimba, from his depth of experience has looked at leadership in the context of Africa and the specific challenges that leaders face in that continent. This is a valuable book for any Christian leader, who will be blessed and also challenged through reading it."

Ian Burness
Former medical missionary and former general director of Echoes of Service.
Author of 'From Glasgow to Garenganze'

"This is a powerful book on leadership. The messages Felix brings to us are relevant and useful, highlighting both the positive and negative sides of leadership, all while presenting insightful biblical application. The cultural perspective and African proverbs are particularly engaging and much-needed in the area of leadership development."

Lawrence Tong DD
Former International Director Operation Mobilization

"The vast experience Felix brings to the topic of Christian leadership makes this book a compelling read. It is practical and easy to relate to. Be prepared though to be challenged and inspired as you navigate your way through the biblical mandates, personal anecdotes, the wisdom of African sayings, and examples of leadership both good and bad. This book is a great guide, reflecting Felix's proven love for God and his deep desire for the church to be led well."

Sefton Marshall
Operations Director Global Connections in Mission New Zealand

"It is a joy and a privilege to recommend this important and timely book on leadership written by my friend and colleague Dr. Felix Muchimba. This book will I believe, be of great benefit to the Christian community and should become a must read for Christian leaders. The reason for this is that it comes from two important places. Firstly, it comes from the heart and the mind of an experienced, and effective Christian Leader. Felix has led the Christian Community for many years as a wise and humble servant in multiple areas of ministry. What he says here will therefore be of great value. Secondly, it comes from Africa – for too long the dominant voice in Christian Leadership circles has been strongly centered in the Western/European experience and mindset. It is so good to hear this much needed African voice, a voice that spoke into the early church but for many years has been silent. Felix Muchimba has helped us once again hear this important voice."

John Benn
Senior Pastor Westville Baptist Church Durban, South Africa

Felix Muchimba

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World of Theology Series

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Foreword

Leadership is a key issue all over the world. Arguably it is particularly key in Africa given the many challenges of this great and diverse continent faces. As we think about leadership, one of the most important places where leadership needs to be seen is in the church. Anyone who has been involved in church will know that every church is a complex and fragile thing. Churches can grow and thrive, but they can also be divided and full of conflict. Churches can be places of personal growth, nurture and blessing, but they can also be a place where people get damaged and hurt and also leave. I would argue that the most important thing that would help a church to experience growth and blessing is to have good leadership.

This book is a very helpful and practical book on the issue of leadership in a local church context and there is no better placed person to write this book than Felix Muchimba. Over his lifetime Felix has had an enormous amount of experience in leadership, both at a church level and also in leading para church organizations. He is a courageous and thoughtful leader and one who reflects deeply on what he does and one who leads with the heart of a Christian servant. All of these qualities are evident in this book.

What we are presented with is a very practical and well thought out introduction to the key features and challenges of leadership in the local church. However, it is also a book that is characterized by honesty and realism. Felix begins by talking about the issue of pain, an issue that will be well known to anyone who has been involved in leadership for any length of time. Being a leader is not ultimately about prestige, but rather it is about helping a church to honor Christ and experience his blessing in growth. However, the pathway to success is full of potholes where leaders can fall and be hurt. Felix recognizes this and talks openly about the issue of pain but also discusses how leaders deal with it.

That, however, is just one of many subjects that this book introduces us to. There are chapters on the development of young people, on spiritual abuse and also on the thorny issue of conflict and how to resolve it. All of these issues are pertinent and important and need to be thought through. Felix also deals with the three great personal battles that every leader faces which are money, sex and power. Many leaders have destroyed their own fruitful ministries by succumbing to these temptations and going against everything that they have preached about it.

Of particular significance are two vital situations that we rarely raise, but which are of huge importance. There is Founder Syndrome were

pioneering leaders with strong personalities and enormous drive struggle to let go and end up bringing years of good service to ruin. Then there is the issue of finishing well what is equally important if a leader wants to leave a legacy. Only someone with experience and maturity can properly deal with these subjects, but the author has both and gives helpful reflections on how these key leaders can handle such personal and painful situations in their own ministry.

One of the most helpful features of this book is that it is written from an African perspective and filled with examples and illustrations as well as proverbs from African culture. It is certainly an ideal book for an African church setting where the issue of leadership is so key. However, it should not be confined to that because the wisdom and reflection Felix has gained from many years of Christian leadership can be beneficial to leaders in every culture and setting.

Felix writes with a pastor's heart and a deep desire that the church honors God and serves him with dignity and efficiency. This is important when writing about such sensitive subjects. However, this book does not set out to scold or to criticize, but rather to encourage and bless. It is immensely practical and should be read by mature leaders and aspiring leaders alike as it contains much needed wisdom for church life today.

Stephen McQuoid
European Director of Gospel Literature Outreach Ministries.

Introduction

I grew up in culture where we were made to believe that leaders had the monopoly of wisdom and absolute authority and hence, they were to be respected and feared. I therefore, internalized the belief that no challenge was too big for the leader to solve. I looked at leaders as fixers of things that are broken, as models, as inspirers, as teachers. In other words, leaders were to me however I chose to see them. Little did I know that we had the good, the bad and the ugly among leaders. It wasn't until in my upper primary school years that I realized I had believed a lie and did consequently have no desire to become a leader. This changed very quickly when I went to secondary school and noticed so many gaps in leadership praxis among my school prefects and teachers. One day my classmate mentioned that I was a good leader judging from my comments and observations of the leadership in the school. He paid attention to some of the actions I would take. Later he said to me:

> "Felix you are the kind of person when you see that something critical and dire that needs to be done and the leadership is reluctant you step in to take the challenge. You have often accepted challenges and problems in a way that other pupils have not. View these as 'leadership opportunities'."

Many years later now, as a leader, I realize that the best learning opportunities often arise out of situations when you are most challenged and pushed beyond your comfort zone. I have learnt that sometimes when you stand and wait for permission you will not get most important things done. I am aware that there are things and situations that scare me, but I have under the conviction of the Holy Spirit learnt to run toward them instead of standing still. As I mature as a leader, I have had to learn that being a leader is itself a huge challenge. There have been moments when faced with precarious and difficulties situations that I have felt like hanging up the groves of leadership. It seems to me that the more one matures in leadership the more complex issues one will face. This happens so we may mature more and be capable of handling even more complex challenges in the future. Real leadership makes great demands on the leader and the people he or she is leading.

The nature of challenges that leaders are confronted with can either be externally of internally generated. External generated challenges such as opposition from others who really should be co-operating with you can usurp your energy. There are indeed many sources and types of external

challenges. Internal challenges may take the shape of fear, insecurity, a particular character flaw etc. on the part of the leader. Leaders are fallen human beings and may experience the same challenges and as everyone else.

The challenges of leadership are ongoing and occur on a 24/7 basis. Leaders function in a world of positive and negative surprises now and again. These challenges or surprises whether pleasant or not present opportunities for exercising leadership with integrity and in a manner that glorifies God and edifies the Body of Christ. This book has been written with a few of such challenges in mind. It is not the desire of the author to write an exhaustive treatise on all the challenges that leaders face. The author has carefully and intentionally selected a few of these challenges which from his own experience of years of leadership are the ones that leaders seem to grapple with most.

Chapter 1: The Pain of Rejection

"You'll grow only to the threshold of your pain." (Samuel Chand)

The Ministry of Pastor Thorn

While waiting in the airport lounge to catch my connecting flight when travelling in one of the Asian countries I struck up a conversation with a lovely American Christian. He narrated to me a story he had once heard. A few years ago, the son of an American retired Pastor had taken over the pastorate of his father's church. He made known to his father about his plans to resign. "Dad, I seem to be getting the whipping they could not give you", he complained. He added, "Dad, the conflict has lasted for some time now. I am young and I have a bright future ahead of me and I would hate to waste any more time in this protracted conflict".

His father listened with keen interest as his son poured his heart out with tears in his eyes. When he finished talking there was a period of silence before his father answered, "Well son, I can understand how hard this must be for you, but it would even be even harder to start a new Church". "I have no plans of starting a new church whatsoever, I must find another job before getting back to church work again", retorted the son. The father tried hard to counsel and encourage his son to continue to serve in his pastorate, but nothing would persuade him to change his mind. It was then that his father mentioned a sermon he had recently heard and encouraged the son to listen to it which the son reluctantly agreed to do.

The following day they met to reflect on the sermon. With a smile on his face the father said, "I wonder who preached that sermon"? It turned out that it was a sermon his son had preached recently on unswerving endurance during hard times. "I understand what you are going through son, and I know you are tired of fighting and if it were possible would do anything for a week of peace and tranquility," his father calmly stated. His father went on to admonish him, "Running is not the answer. Son, if you want peace, whatever the next station of service will be do not mention the name Jesus. Don't preach or sing about him. Have nothing to do with the name of Jesus because if you do Satan will attack you from within and without". The wise father concluded with these words, "My dear son you will need to be still and let Pastor Thorn minister to you". His son was puzzled and asked, "Dad I know a lot of preachers, but I did not know a Pastor Thorn. Who is that?"

His father handed him a Bible and told him to open it to 2 Corinthians 12 and read verses 7 to 9. It was then the penny dropped as he read the Apostle Paul's words:

> "To keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassingly great revelations, there was given to me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weaknesses'."

Then his father admonished him again, "My dear son, your problem is that you want to minister to others, but you won't let Pastor Thorn minister to you. It is God's practice that sometimes, he will make you sit down and let Pastor Thorn minister to you. You can only move on once Pastor Thorn has been able to minister to you". By this time the son had tears in his eyes and asked the father to pray for him for grace to endure and that he would live what he preached. Even though the son did not like what he heard that day, he did appreciate it. The essence of this story is that no Christian leader can minister effectively to others for the Lord's sake without experiencing seasons of pain. Yes, there will come a time when a leader will have to take what he ministers to others and minister it to himself. Pastor Thorn has an extensive and powerful ministry among Christian leaders.

The Pain of Leadership

As regards this subject matter David Lundy discloses:

> "Ministry is spiritual warfare, and its leaders are special targets of the Evil One. We cannot get around it. Leaders can experience a lack of appreciation. They can be ambushed by the very people they have given themselves to sacrificially. They can be misunderstood when their intentions are honorable. These attacks take their toll over time."[1]

It is not easy to be in the public eye. As a leader your life becomes important to the public. I sometimes feel sorry for the celebrities, for politicians and certainly for decent people who find themselves in the public eye. As a leader, everyone has something to say about you; they have the birthright to criticize. Leadership can be painful and messy. In his book, 'Leadership Pain' Chand says, "*Reluctance to face pain is your greatest limitation. There is no*

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[1] David Lundy, *Servant leadership for slow learners* (Colorado Springs: Authentic Publishers, 2000), 215.

growth without change, no change without loss, and no loss without pain. Bottom line: if you're not hurting, you're not leading." He refers to it as 'breedership'. Pain offers us the chance to grow and to create new commitments based upon the truth God reveals to us. This goes against what most of us have been taught and come to believe about leadership and all its accompanying power, razzmatazz, glory, and wealth. No single leader experiences the success of leadership without also knowing pain. It is up to each individual leader whether they will choose to press through the pain and grow as a leader or quit leading. Elisabeth Elliot once stated:

> "I am not a theologian or a scholar, but I am very aware of the fact that pain is necessary to all of us. In my own life, I think I can honestly say that out of the deepest pain has come the strongest conviction of the presence of God and the love of God."[2]

The Purpose of Pain in Leadership

I once heard a medical doctor state that leprosy as an ailment does not cause the loss of limbs such as toes and fingers. The loss is because people with the disease have lost sensitivity, so they do not feel pain when they knock or injure themselves. I suppose one of the reasons God created pain is so that we may pay attention to the hurting body part and do something to remedy it. Pain is good but certainly not desirable. Pain makes us grow. Commenting on the purpose of pain Sanders notes:

> "Everyone entrusted with spiritual authority can expect tests, temptations, and trials along the way. As difficult and inconvenient these tests may be, they serve to purify and clarify leadership. The first Chapter of James demonstrates that God allows, even plans, these experiences for our good and for our growth. Tests are meant to let us succeed, not fail. Tests display progress."[3]

Growing in and through Pain

No-one makes it their mission to seek pain. Our natural reaction to physical pain is to try to stop it as soon as possible. However, with 'growing pains' for leaders, stopping the pain can have negative results. When the

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[2] Cf. https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1087066-i-am-not-a-theologian-or-a-scholar-but-i [last accessed 05.08.2025].

[3] Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual leadership – principals of excellence for every believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 131.

pain stops, the process of growth also stops. A good and developing leader will know that pain equals growth. You must view pain as your greatest teacher for your growth. Whatever shape or form pain takes view it as fuel for learning and growth. Embrace pain and grow in and through it. It is often through pain that we know our need, acknowledge sin, recognize truth, and by it our faith is tested.

Pain is necessary as it purifies us. We all need to go through the furnace to be purified; to grow in character and become more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Something good comes out of pain if we respond to it in the right way. If we are really honest with ourselves, it is through pain that our growth and development flourish the most. Regardless of whether our pain is professionally, financially, personally, spiritually, physically, or emotionally self-inflicted or comes from an external source, we must not deny it or allow it to paralyze us. Someone once said, *"I am convinced that life is 10% of what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it."* In other words, you may not be responsible for what people do to you, but you are responsible for how you react to it – how you react is what destroys or builds you up. Leaders should be aware that others are watching how they deal with pain while continuing to lead when it enters their lives. This is what distinguishes 'the men from the boys'. This is what differentiates between those who faint under the pressure of pain and those who allow pain to become a gift.

Truly, discomfort can be a catalyst for personal growth. The discomfort summons the change agents in an individual to kick into action for transformation. Pain has the ability to stretch someone beyond their current capabilities and abilities, thrusting them out of their comfort zones in such a way that as they respond positively to it, they discover a level of capability and ability they never knew existed within them. It is only to the extent that you allow and endure pain that you will grow. Fighting pain is our default human configuration. We live in a world where comfort is overrated and celebrated. One thing for sure is that comfort does not lead to happiness. Comfort is a de-motivator of hard work and promotes forgetfulness. I have learnt that comfort may often lead to discontentment, egotism and tediousness.

I love discomfort because it makes a leader yearn for something more. It compels the leader to act so as to move to a higher level of maturity. When faced with pain or discomfort a leader has a choice to make. The perspective they take determines the result. A leader will either view pain as a jail or a lecture room. If the perspective taken is that of a jail, then a leader misses out key lessons as he or she runs from the lecture room to jail. The jail imprisons a leader and eventually paralyses their ministry.

The lecture room teaches and equips leaders to grow and better respond to the assured future pain. The lecture room arms you to identify your challenges and develop strategies to move forward and grow because of pain rather that view it as a hindrance. When, as a leader, you experience pain admit it. Seek the face of God as to how best to respond to it and confide in your mentor and seek counsel. Jim Van Yperen observes, "Only by trusting God through pain, uncertainty and opposition do we prove His will and demonstrate His power"[4] Do not put up a spiritual front. This is hypocrisy. Be real. Many a leader projects the image of a great teacher/missionary and an outstanding leader while inside they are on a downward spiritual spiral.

Pain also allows the leader to offer empathy to others and minister in a more meaningful way since they themselves have been down that road several times. The Apostle Paul had something of this in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2Cor 1:3-4).

Types of Pain

No matter who you are, where you live, what you do for a living, whether rich or poor, you will have experienced disappointment. There are many kinds of pain leaders experience. They experience it in different domains such as physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, or spiritual. Furthermore, for each of these areas of pain the manifestation may take different form or shape. Below are just a few examples of different types of pain.

The Pain of Being Misunderstood

It does not matter how best you try to avoid being misunderstood, the chances are that you will be at some point in your life. Your speech, writing, actions and attitude may be misrepresented, misunderstood or misinterpreted. There are various causes of misunderstanding which include culture, style of communication, moods, personality, gender etc. Sometimes, misunderstanding occurs because people do not listen to one another. They make assumptions about the conversation or what is written

[4] Jim Van Yperen, "Conflict: The Refining Fire of Leadership". In: George Barna (ed.). *Leaders on Leadership* (California: Regal Books, 1997), 242.

and presume that they understand. I recall in the early days of the internet, when the bandwidth was very weak in Zambia, I received an email from a friend overseas via a radio signal connection. I wrote back to my friend that what he had written was rubbish and did not make sense. My friend was highly offended. I was surprised at his response. What I should have written was that when the email reached my end it was not decoded well so that all I received were funny characters. I later clarified the issue.

Of course, there are occasions when you can do everything right and yet be completely misunderstood. Misunderstanding is an inevitable part of our life. As long as we live in community, we cannot eliminate it. If you live in solitude or isolation, then you can be assured of unanimous support for your decisions and complete conformity with your viewpoints. Differences and disagreements are an inevitable part of living in a relationship with other people. A leader needs to embrace misunderstandings and not try to avoid them because God can use the controversy to chip away the rough edges of the leader's personality. It is Kelsey who said, "Do not worry. God loves you so much and is so interested in our growth that in his infinite mercy and love he will always provide us with a few [enemies]."[5]

There are times when it may be best to ignore the misunderstanding and sweep it under the carpet, without much consequence to the relationship. Sometimes misunderstandings can be easily resolved, but there are other times when, because of the seriousness and passion attaching to the content they become much harder to resolve. Misunderstandings that attract intense conflict are never solved quickly and certainly not by forcing an agreement or producing a pseudo-compromise, which only covers-up the problem. It conceals the wound, but the pain is not healed. The parties involved remain estranged. How then should such an impasse be handled?

1. Embrace the *truth* in what is being said: The temptation is always to see the error in what others are saying and not acknowledge such truth as is contained in what they say. The point is not whether what is being said is fair but whether it is true. It is important to acknowledge the correct things they have thought or said before pointing out where they have got it wrong. Strive to understand the other person. True listening is about hearing the other person's hurts, pain, joy and struggles. This kind of listening affirms the other person's worth and value.
2. Acknowledge the *wrong*: If it turns out that you are the one who had a misunderstanding you should be humble and mature enough

[5] Morton Kelsey, *Caring* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 168.

to own up to your mistake. Humility is one of the virtues of a true and mature leader. You should seek forgiveness and reconciliation. Mt 5:23-24, says "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" and Mt 18:15 adds "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." Put the responsibility on the offended as well as on the offender to take the imitative to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

3. Remain focused on your *call*: Leaders who can manage and handle controversy are those who know themselves and are certain of their calling. This is because before they can listen to someone they must first understand and accept themselves and know their God-given mission. If you have listened and tried everything within your power to deal with the misunderstanding and the other party remains unwilling to be reconciled to you, then rather than get distracted by the conflict, simply go about and do what God has called you to do. However, continue to pray and love the other party. Do not even attempt to gossip about the issue with others.

The Pain of People Leaving Your Church or Ministry

One of the beauties of the human race is that we were created with the ability to choose. We are confronted with a variety of choices every day. At some point in a leader's life, they will find it necessary to resign from a church or ministry of which they have been a member. Often this can be a very emotional and trying time both for the one leaving and the leader who is being 'left' – especially if parting is amicable. Circumstances do arise which can cause a person to want or need to change church or ministry. Sometimes these reasons may be illegitimate. Therefore, it is important, when considering leaving to evaluate circumstances and motives. If you are leaving because you are running away from having to give a deserved apology, this is unacceptable. Similarly, leaving over petty differences of opinion about inconsequential things can be a clear indication that you need to examine your spirituality. The leaving of 'troublemakers' is often met with sighs of relief. However, the departure of key leaders, whether for entirely legitimate or for illegitimate reasons, can be very painful. Sometimes the pain may be experienced by those who have put in so much in growing the ministry and now due to poor leadership as result of

leadership changes, they feel forced to make the difficult choice to leave. The person leaving would have endured so much from the new leader who has come in that they feel they cannot take anymore. In some cases, the new leadership will have a hidden agenda to be rid of all the people associated with the old leadership. In other cases, it becomes necessary to leave a ministry for the sake of conscience, or out of a duty to obey God rather than men. There is certainly nothing wrong with moving simply because another ministry offers more opportunities for growth and service consistent with what you believe the Lord has called you to fulfill. It may also be legitimate to move to another ministry if the ministry to which you presently belong has shifted from its original vision, mission statement and philosophy of ministry. Similarly, it may also be quite proper to change ministry because you are being called to fulfill a ministry in another place that no one else is fulfilling and which you could not fulfill at your present ministry.

Whatever the reasons and circumstances for leaving may be someone somewhere will be hurt. It can be very painful if the people you have helped the most are the first to complain and leave. The pain is made even worse if a team member leaves and takes others with him. The leader will have invested years to train and disciple them, engaged them, supported them, encouraged them, and then they leave often without honor. All this is painful but that is what leadership is about. As a leader, in the middle of much pain, you need a thick skin and a big heart – more importantly you need a gracious, forgiving and forbearing heart – a Christ-like heart. No matter how hurt a leader may be because someone leaves, ceremoniously or unceremoniously, the leader has no right to become very critical and unfriendly with them. The one who leaves remains a brother or sister in the Lord and a fellow worker in the Ministry of Reconciliation together with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Pain of Deep Disappointment

It was at a time when the ministry Chanda was leading was celebrating its zenith. Chanda had seen God answer prayers in very unexpected ways. New programs had been introduced to meet the needs of the community and the Church. Chanda was experiencing very good will from his ministry partners both within and outside the country. What Chanda did not know was that some of his team members were jealous of him and were holding clandestine meetings plotting how they could discredit him. Chanda was not in good books with a few Board members because he had exposed their surreptitious activities. His team members were jealous as Chanda was the

one to travel extensively to build relations with local and international partners. The disgruntled team members and part of the Board formed a cartel to oust Chanda. Long story short – the plan worked. It was not until later that the Board, with a new chairman, realized the wrong done and to their credit apologized to Chanda but not before irreparable damage had been done to the ministry. Chanda was deeply disappointed at the betrayal by his own team and the lack of integrity by some of the Board.

Like Chanda, every leader battles feelings of disappointment when things take an unexpected turn. It is naïve to think that following Christ should give us special immunity from trouble. Chanda fought his way through loss and disappointment and wondered what was going on. As Chanda was struggling with these setbacks, it seemed to him that leaders in other ministries were thriving. He wondered why they were doing so well, and he was not. He fought his way through the loss and disappointment. Chanda's experience was not unique to him. Many other leaders go through similar pain. It is almost unbelievable to see how leaders have allowed jealousy, hatred, gossip, and all forms of evil infiltrate their ranks and cause divisions and factions. There are so many leaders today who carry the great pain of deep disappointment arising from what has been done to them by those they believed were colleagues in the ministry. For those leaders who have endured such an unfortunate experience it may take a long time for them to trust colleagues again, even in a new ministry environment.

Additionally, there is the disappointment leaders face when the ministry does not align with their expectations. Leaders need to know, that Christian leadership sometimes feels like a roller-coaster ride when hope and faith crash against the unexpected realities of life. When your ministry is not turning out like you thought or hoped it would, when prayers are not answered as you desired, and your dreams become shattered, disappointment is the natural outcome. If you are a leader, I need barely mention that you will already be well-acquainted with the pain of disappointment. The author has been hurt and frustrated many times. He has learnt to ask the right question when facing disappointment. The question is not, "Why, me Lord?" It is not even, "Why, not me Lord?", rather "What now, Lord?" This question puts God at the center of what you are going through. It refocuses your hope and healing on God. It reassures you that there is life after life – life after the disappointment. Indeed, you may still feel angry or disheartened by disappointments, but you will also discover that God is keen to show you what the next step should be. Furthermore, God will equip you with everything you need to do it. God and you can together handle any situation.

Let me suggest a few healthy ways in which a leader can deal with disappointment.

Get the Big Picture

We pointed out that when you experience disappointment the question to ask is, "What now Lord?" It is a question that enables you to move on and not become an inhabitant of the disappointment zone. No matter how painful your disappointment may be, God's answer to your question, "What now, Lord?" always begins with this simple command, "Where you cannot trace me, trust me. I know what I am doing. I have the big picture, and I would like you to embrace it as well". Once you 'get' the big picture you will be able to say like Job (13:15) "Though he slays me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face." The big picture helps us grow in faith because God can take our disappointments and work them for our good. When that happens, we come to the staggering conclusion that the omnipotent God of the universe is on our side. The big picture aids us in learning about ourselves, others, ministry and God. The big picture does not listen to the voice that calls for revenge – getting even –instead it responds in grace, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The author recalls very well that during his dark times in his life, his mentor reminded him of what Paul said in Romans 8:28, 'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose'. "This will give you the big picture", he said. The mentor continued to state, "You may not see the picture right now, but it shall be formed before your eyes as you look to the Lord. Sometimes we get stuck focusing on the here and now; our present situation isn't the whole picture". Just like the Lord, his master, Paul's ministry was punctuated by many disappointments. His epistles reveal this to us. The apostle never quit encouraging his fellow believers to see the big picture in the midst of their trials and hold on to their supreme hope in God. It is no wonder he wrote:

> "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2Cor 4:16-18).

Our sovereign God's plans are nearly always bigger than we think or imagine. The pain of our relatively short-term disappointments in no way

compares with the ultimate hope we have in Him. It is for this reason that the apostle Peter writes, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1Pe 1:13). Putting it in another way Peter is saying, "Listen my friends, wonderful things will come our way once Jesus returns to this troubled earth". Yet, even now, God offers compassion, forgiveness, and strength to those who trust in Him. God gives to those who trust Him and have a rich relationship with Him the great hope that empowers them to face any disappointment.

Take It to the Lord

When we encounter disappointment, our natural tendency is not to ask the right question but to complain. Unfortunately, moaning and sharing the problem with other people rarely helps solve it. We often do this as a way of seeking sympathy and comfort. It is no wonder that at times people keep away from us because nobody wants to hang around a person who has a self-pitying, pessimistic outlook on life. The best friends can do is to pray for us and sympathize as well as empathize with us. Only God has the power to transform us, our situation, or both. He knows and understands the situation perfectly and he knows the future and what needs to be done. God's friendship can sustain us in the midst of criticism from friends and adversaries, financial challenges, ministry disappointments, and broken relationships. Trust me: God had a good track record with all those who trusted him. The Apostle Paul testifies to this fact when he writes, "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom 8:31-33). Paul was certain that nothing could separate him from Christ's love. Death cannot, and life cannot. The angels cannot, and the demons cannot either. Your fears for today, your worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell cannot keep God's love away (v. 38). The more you surrender your security into God's enduring love, the less power disappointments will have to undermine your hope.

We should neither deny the feeling nor suppress it with the hope that it will melt away somehow with time. We must deal with it. We **need** to pour our heart out to someone: first to God and then our mentor. Disappointment is too heavy an emotional load to bear alone. I have always got great comfort and assurance in the Scriptures and in Joseph Scriven's words:

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

If we let disappointments accumulate, they can lead to discouragement and discouragement leads to despair. Disappointment can compound into depression or despair, which may lead to serious consequences. This is not God's will for his servants. God, in his grace and mercy, commands us to take our heartaches to him. God is not offended by our griping. Psalms 31 and 102 are poetic writings of hurts and grievances. We must feel free to complain to God because He is the only one who has the power to deal with our pain. Friends are essential, but humans can let us down and err in judgment.

To sum up, as we have seen, leadership also attracts criticism some justified and some not and either way this can lead to disappointment. When as a leader you receive criticism, what meaning do you attach to it? You must remember that the more you grow and the more you achieve, the more criticism you will attract. It is the way leadership works. Some leaders deliberately want criticism so they can fight back. This is futile. Critics go away and move on. A leader, who wants productive growth pain, should surround themselves with trustworthy people who can give them accurate, improvement-oriented feedback in their best interests. The most important thing is to always learn from constructive criticism and take the rest to the Lord.

Learn from Your Disappointment.

No-one deliberately invites disappointment to come their way, but it is inevitable as long as you live in community. If your highest hope is in achievement, you will eventually be disappointed: success is transient. However, though not welcome, disappointment and failure when responded to positively can help to build character and patience. If we are so

afraid of disappointment that we lower our hopes, we can close ourselves off from what God may have in mind. The proper balance can be elusive. The words of the Apostle Paul in Rom 5:3-4 come to mind here, "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope". Disappointment is a good class-room teacher. It can instruct you to win and lose with grace, an increasingly lost virtue these days. In any case there is no 'winner' or 'loser' in the Kingdom of God. I have grown much spiritually in moments of much disappointment. It is in such moments that any leader's true spirituality comes to the surface.

Learn from the Word of God

The Scriptures have a lot to teach us about disappointment. This section is not intended to give an exhaustive teaching on this subject, but to sketch out a good approach. As Christians we serve a God who is able to comfort us when we face disappointment. In Isaiah 43:1-2, God comforted his people by promising that he would release the Jews out of their coming captivity in Babylon; that his presence would be with them; that he would support them and eventually deliver them out of captivity. He declares:

> "But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze'" (Is 43:1-2).

The Lord promises to protect, comfort, strengthen, and guide those who love him; those who have a personal relationship with Him. We must not forget that when we experience disappointment God is still in control. We have already referred to Romans 8:28 where we saw a promise from God to those who are committed to Him that nothing will happen in their lives that God is not controlling. God is controlling and working everything out for our good and His glory. In his sovereignty, God sometimes allows disappointment to force us to trust him more fully. Of this Paul writes:

> "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead" (2Cor 1:8-9 ESV).

At times the temptation for Christian leaders is that they begin to think that God is bestowing His goodness on them because they deserve it. They think that somehow, "God saved us through *His* power, but we will take it from here and live the Christian life in *our* power". God can certainly use hardships and disappointments to help leaders realize that we *cannot* live sanctified lives apart from Him. As his workers we are dependent on God's love and His gracious enabling.

We must also bear in mind that the Sovereign Lord may use our reaction to disappointment as a witness to others, both the community of faith and the world. When we trust the Lord in moments of difficulty and disappointment, it can be a huge witness to many. When folk who know us see how we handle our difficulties and disappointments, by trusting in God, they see that our faith is real. The apostle Paul lived out this reality. We are not told with what ailment or affliction Paul struggled that caused him great grief. We read of Paul crying and pleading with the Lord three times, to be relieved of this ailment:

> "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2Cor 12:8-10).

Paul had an unshakeable faith and trust in Christ. He was very confident that even if *his* prayers were not answered the way he wanted them answered, his faith would remain rock solid in the Lord. Paul would like us to learn that it is in times of our greatest weakness and trouble that God is most powerfully at work in our lives. We therefore do well to remember that when we face disappointment the God we serve will comfort us; he is in control. He will sometimes use our disappointments to turn our hearts toward Him and sometimes He uses them as a witness of His sufficiency as we trust Him. Indeed, the Lord Jesus is our strength and our refuge in the good times and the bad. No one is more powerful than He is and no one loves us more than He does.

The Pain of Carrying Others' Pain

Invariably there comes a time in the life of every leader when they need to make a very difficult decision involving someone who needs to be disciplined or relieved of their responsibility for one reason or another. I was

faced with such a challenge. As a chairperson of a Christian organization, I had to make a strong recommendation to my Board members to let the CEO of the organization leave because of serious incidents that merited this action. The night before the decision was to be made, I could not sleep because of my own anxiety and dread. This leader had a close relationship with me. I had discipled and mentored him over the years and now I was faced with the prospect of relieving him of his role. I was also aware that my relationship with him would be adversely affected. I then recalled the words someone had pointed out to me from some source, "Leaders do not inflict pain – they bear pain". This resonated with my situation. Let me explain. There is no way you can relieve someone of their role without inflicting pain and also without your bearing pain as a leader.

That dear brother suffered, but so did I. Had we kept this leader in his job, the organization would have suffered irreversible damage. This leader was a good person and indeed a child of God with many gifts and abilities, but a tough decision had to be made. This was a decision that I had to make with tears and a heavy heart. It reminded me of the few occasions when, many years ago as a pastor, I had to put someone out of fellowship for a time due to serous moral failure. These were moments that brought tears to my eyes. I do not like to be in that situation but as a leader this becomes inevitable. When a decision has been made to discipline someone it is common that a leader will be criticized by others who do not have the full picture before them.

The pain on the part of the leader is caused by the fact that Christians are one – the body of Christ – if one part of the body suffers the whole body does and if one part rejoices, the whole body rejoices with it (1Cor 12:26). The Apostle Paul was more than familiar with this kind of pain. He says in 2Cor 11:29, "When someone gets to the end of his rope, I feel the desperation in my bones. When someone is duped into sin, an angry fire burns in my gut" (The Message). Once again, we see Paul struggling in his own heart with the bold decision he had to make to write a difficult letter to the Corinthians. The letter, however, had a positive impact on the church in Corinth:

> "Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it – I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while – yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to

> clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter" (2Cor 7:8-11).

Paul's heart must have been bleeding when he penned the letter. His anger arose not just on account of the sin the Corinthians tolerated, but also because he had to write a difficult letter to those he loved. Paul took no joy in writing the letter, but he considered it necessary. You see, ministry relationships are not like those we read in novels, when the boss, with much bravado, simply declares, "You're fired!" and goes on with his business as usual. I wish it could be as easy as that, but it is not. When a leader has to make a tough and unpopular decision to discipline someone they are dealing with a person's emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual life. Such a decision must be made with much prayer, counsel and humility and yet, boldly.

Obviously, leaders must make every effort not to give in to the temptation to inflict unnecessary pain on others for selfish reasons or wrong motives. I believe that a godly leader cannot be motivated by a desire to get even or to show someone who is the boss. By the same token, leaders must ensure that they do not succumb to the temptation to reduce the necessary pain. This is the kind of leader's pain that emanates from making necessary, and painful decisions that affect the lives of others. God-honoring leadership requires the willingness to bear the pain of others. To carry out necessary disciplinary measures against one of his or her team is no mean feat for any leader. It is painful and unpleasant, but it must be done if the culprit is to learn and, hopefully, grow to become a better worker.

Managing Pain

I recall showing my ignorance to a group of UK students, in 1996. The conversation around the meal table centered on different cultures and how we respond to them. Being the only African around the table and wanting to stress a point, I said, "I wish you English would learn that a cup of tea doesn't fix much in our culture when one is going through some difficulties". Their reaction shocked me. It had nothing to do with the content of my sentence but the use of the word 'English'. You see, there were students from the various countries of the UK. For the politically and culturally uninitiated all who live in the UK are 'British' but not all are 'English'. Those students from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland did not like it at all. I learnt my lesson. To show how 'evil' the English were the Scottish students made me watch *Braveheart.* This is Mel Gibson's movie about a Scottish hero, William Wallace.

The main theme of the movie is freedom, and it shows how a leader is transformed by emotional and physical pain. It depicts how William Wallace and his fighters would march straight into pain instead of avoiding it and escaping it at all costs. He loses his new wife, endures several injuries, faces betrayal from trusted associates and is badly tortured once he is captured. At various intervals in the movie different folk come to him suggesting ways to reduce future pain. However, each time William rejects their solutions. You hear him state, *"... every man dies but not every man truly lives".*

When you as a leader are confronted by pain, as you surely will be, do not avoid it and do not minimize it. Neither should you numb yourself to it. Pain never just goes away. When it's not resolved, it sinks deep into our minds, creates anxiety in our hearts, causes resentment as well as health-related issues and creates tension in our relationships. Instead, ask God what He has in store and how you can manage it, learn from it and grow through it. Ironically, our pain may be a means of fulfilling God's divine purposes for our ministries, communities and other leaders. Let me suggest some ways in which you can manage pain.

Focus and Ownership of the Vision

There has never been a man more focused and convinced of the vision and mission than Jesus Christ. He announced his mission and vision at the onset of his earthly ministry:

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:16-21).

Several times Jesus Christ reminded his followers regarding his mission and vision. It was during times of much emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual pain that he restated his mission. It is little wonder that the writer to the Hebrews states' "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:2-3). Christ is the Good Shepherd

and not a hireling who runs away when he sees a wolf coming to devour his sheep (Jn 10:11-13). To the same degree, be it greater or lesser, that you own the vision you will also be willing to suffer and endure pain. People that truly own the vision do not focus on the pain they are going through. They have the big picture. They see the result – the glory – the fruit of their pain – whether produced in their lifetime or in the distant future. William Wallace owned the vision. It kept him going through every difficulty and he was willing to die for it. Leaders must keep the vision fresh and strong. They must not allow themselves to be consumed by immediate pain and obvious challenges. If a leader focuses more on the pain than the vision, there is a danger of the leader redefining the vision so as to ease the pain. History makers live by the motto, 'No surrender; no retreat'. For a Christian leader, ownership of the vision means a clear appreciation that God has given the vision, and the Holy Spirit is at work in and through the leader. Consequently, the leader depends on the Holy Spirit for guidance and sustenance in times of pain. Yes, leadership can be messy and dangerous. However, in the midst of pain and its challenges, God gives us the physical, emotional and spiritual support we need to thrive as leaders. The all-certain *sense of God's call* to carry out the vision He has planted in Christian leaders will keep them sustained when the going gets tough and seemingly unbearable. It is this deep knowledge of God's call and vision that kept the Apostle Paul going even in the midst of much pain as he wrote to Timothy in 2Tim 1:8-12:

> "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2Tim 1:8-12 NKJV).

Have a 'Pain Response Plan'

In short, I call this the 'PRP'. In other words, you will need to *decide ahead of time* how you will handle the experiences of pain that come your way. We like to think we will just know what to do when our lives hit a rough patch. The truth is that we need to plan well ahead of time how we will

respond when pain hits us in the face. I believe there is a direct correlation between the level of your preparation and the level of your response to pain. Someone has said that planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.

Pain in leaders is a necessary evil because no one experiences the success of leadership without also knowing its pain. It is unfortunate that nowadays many of our pastoral programs are designed to alleviate pain. However, pain is real, and it is part of life and leadership. Nevertheless, we are not to seek and provoke it. The PRP needs to be part of a rigorous Personal Development Plan. Anyone who has a plan to grow, will incorporate in it the difficulties, challenges and trials life brings their way as a means to a stronger more capable and more resilient leadership self.

Jesus Christ had a PRP. He knew and told his disciples about the pain that he would go through and prepared himself for it. Note the following scriptures:

> "When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.' And the disciples were filled with grief" (Mt 17:22-23).

> "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" (Mt 20:18-19).

> "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise. But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it" (Mk 9:31-32).

The gross misunderstanding, misrepresentation and suffering of Christ did not come as a surprise to him. As fully God, he permitted such things to happen to him, and he was fully aware of these long before the foundation of the world. As fully man, Christ was equally aware of what lay ahead of him, and he spoke about it as seen in the scriptures above. Christ publicized his PRP to his twelve disciples although they did not then have a full appreciation of it. It seems that came only after the resurrection of Christ: "He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' Then they remembered his words" (Lk 24:6-8). Christ's PRP which He revealed to his disciples prepared them to position themselves for the task of missions

that lay ahead of them. When leaders openly share their PRP with their team, the team is strengthened and encouraged. The PRP prepares the leader emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually to respond positively and in a godly way to pain.

The Apostle Paul seemed to have developed his own PRP. This is reflected in his final message to the Ephesian elders:

> "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (Ac 20:22-24 NIV).

A PRP assists the leader to put things in perspective by viewing life from the 'Big Picture' angle. It brings eternity into the present and takes the present into eternity. It motivates a leader to press on despite the various setbacks and the pain he or she may encounter. It motivates others – the onlookers, the witnesses – to desire to emulate the example of the leader. Remember the words of the Apostles after they had been wrongly imprisoned, brought before the Sanhedrin and flogged, "... The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (Ac 5:41-42).

What are the constituents of a good PRP?

1. An awareness that pain is part of leadership.
2. An expectation that pain will come your way sooner or later.
3. Acknowledge and embrace pain without resentment regardless of the source.
4. When you experience pain do not respond in the flesh but rely on the resources of God to see you through.
5. Write down the lessons you are learning through the season of pain.
6. Be very honest and state how you, yourself, may have contributed to the pain experience.
7. State how you can raise your level of handling and persevering through the pain.
8. Reflect on how you can come alongside, relate to and help someone else who may go through similar pain in the future.
9. Look beyond the pain.
10. Expect another season of pain to come your way again.

The PRP will prepare you to respond to pain in a way that does not impact negatively on your spiritual life. It enables you to perceive the pain not as a threat but a challenge. You see whether you view pain as a threat or a challenge it sets into motion two diametrically opposed cascades of emotions, thoughts, and behavior that result in either a constructive or harmful response to pain. A leader's ability to respond to pain as a challenge, rather than with the threat reaction could very well determine whether they not only survive the pain but also come out of it stronger than ever. God has provided sufficient grace to each one of us to see us through pain and learn from it.

Conclusion

Having the privilege of being a Christian leader in any organization is one of the most difficult and stressful jobs in the world. Leadership is full of challenges, risks, and stresses not just for the leader but for their family as well. Yet with each of these hardships many leaders continue to find massive fulfillment in their roles, as they see God use them to change lives and transform communities. These leaders are motivated by the passion to serve God's purposes in their generation to God's glory and hopefully one day to hear from the Lord they serve, "Well-done good and faithful servant".

Questions for Reflection

- Why is it necessary for a leader to experience pain sometimes?
- Can you recall a time when as a leader you were faced with a situation that affected you negatively? How did you deal with it?
- If you were faced with a similar situation today, how would you react differently now?
- Are you experiencing pain right now in your role as a leader? Is there someone you can talk to to help you deal with the pain?

Memory Verse

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (Jam 1:2-5 NIV).

Chapter 2: Young People in Leadership

"Young people can create beautiful things." (Aurora)

Introduction

On one of my flights, I watched a movie "Up in the Air" a 2009 American comedy-drama starring George Clooney and Anna Kendrick. The film is about an arrogant young MBA who tries to revolutionize a corporate downsizing company by conducting scripted video firings to save on travel expenses. Unfortunately, it does not go well for her. She gradually discovers how much she has to learn from her much older and experienced co-workers and how little she understands the business. To her credit, in the end, this young woman emerges a more thoughtful, empathetic person who will no doubt be a much more effective leader in the future.

For me this movie amusingly underscored three fundamental truths. The first is that effective leadership is much more than just coming up with a great business plan that gets one noticed. As this young woman learnt, leadership is also the ability to listen to other people, refine ideas and inspire everyone to work together toward a common goal. She learnt that leadership is less about "me" and much more about "us" – team work. The second lesson was that you need to be ready for leadership. It maybe that the skills which got you noticed are not the same ones that will make you an effective leader. The third lesson I gleaned was that new young leaders have to have thick skin. They must prepare themselves for criticism, isolation, jealousy and generational conflict. In the midst of all these they need to know how to persuade and influence people in a non-manipulative manner.

The world gets excited about young leadership, but quite often young leaders make mistakes because they lack the wisdom of their senior leaders. What they lack in wisdom, they try to make up for in energy, faith and optimism. However, young potential leaders, who exhibit humility and a willingness to learn from those with greater leadership experience will, themselves, be well prepared and ready to take on leadership positions.

My definition of 'young' for the purpose of this book is somewhere between the ages of 20-40. Nevertheless, this varies with each individual's degree of maturity or immaturity. I know of some leaders between the ages of 50-80 who exhibit some of the same weaknesses as the young people. This chapter is not meant to categorize every young person; it serves to illustrate some of the most common mistakes. We must be quick to

acknowledge that there are certainly exceptional young leaders in our world today. Some suggestions on how best we can facilitate and encourage young leaders will be discussed as well.

A Biblical Illustration of Arrogant Leadership (1 Kings 12)

The son and successor of King Solomon, Rehoboam, was the last king to ascend to the throne of old Israel and the first king of Judah after the division of the kingdom. Following a succession of events the people came to Shechem and agreed to accept Rehoboam as their king on condition that he would lighten the grievous service and burdensome taxes of his father. Rehoboam requested for three days in which to consider the peoples request. Unfortunately, Rehoboam went against the advice of mature and experienced men, who counseled him that he might win the people by becoming their servant. Instead, he chose the advice of the younger men, who were of his own age. They counseled Rehoboam to rule by sternness rather than by kindness, and slapped the people in the face with his, "My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions."

It is clear that Rehoboam misjudged the mood of the people, as well as his own ability. Jeroboam was a leader more able than Rehoboam and subsequently won the hearts of the people and a rebellion followed. The masses felt cheated and betrayed by Rehoboam as is reflected in their words, "Get lost, David! We've had it with you, son of Jesse! Let's get out of here, Israel, and fast! From now on, David, mind your own business". (1Ki 12:16 The Message). Subsequently, we see the ten tribes dethroned Rehoboam, and elected Jeroboam, their champion and spokesman, to be their king. Rehoboam's arrogance not only led to the division of the Kingdom but also to the death of Adoram, his Treasurer. Rehoboam had to flee back to Jerusalem to reign from then on over Judah and the adjacent territory of the tribe of Benjamin only.

Some Common Pitfalls among Young Leaders

Pride

I know of a young man who in his early twenties took his first ministry assignment. This young man soon started experiencing what would be

termed as 'quick fruit' – favor and multiplication of the ministry. Soon he was appointed Youth Ministry Coordinator responsible for all twenty-five congregations in his province. His heart was full of love for the Lord and passion to serve him. He was bold, strong, and ready to take on large challenges. He became the darling of his leaders and the congregations. Unfortunately, he didn't see a heart of pride growing inside him. As a result of having been noticed his ego got out of control. His stroked ego began to tell him that he was better than he really was. He began to feel that his ideas were the only good ones and his job the only important one. He really should have been pulling people together as a team to move the ministry forward. He should have known that success requires empathy, careful listening and good communication skills.

Unfortunately, this young leader took personal credit for the gifts he possessed, which resulted in his getting caught in the traps of success and the measurement of results. He justified his ambition by calling it "serving the Lord sacrificially" but inside him pride was taking root without his noticing. Unintentionally, the congregations 'idolized' him for quick fruit in his work and created a celebrity status for him. It seems this made the young man take ownership for the gifts God had entrusted to him as a steward, believing, even subconsciously, that God owed him for his efforts to serve him. This 'successful' Youth ministry coordinator eventually became arrogant and would not listen to the counsel of the leaders. He ended up by having affairs with two of his female co-leaders. His lack of humility and pride eventually destroyed his heart and ministry. Scripture warns us, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Pr 16:18). Young leaders must be cautious, very cautious, of the various subtle ways that pride disguises itself as something good. Perhaps the biggest and most pernicious temptation young leaders face is pride. They are young and full of ideas that they think can change the world. All this is good, but it can work against the young leader if he or she refuses to listen to needed critique, the wisdom of mentors, and constructive criticism. There are both encouragement and warning for young leaders in the Bible. For example, in 1 Timothy 4:12 scripture encourages young people to not let their youth interfere in the way of leading. 1 Timothy 3:6 also warns against appointing immature individuals to positions of responsibility because they lack experience.

The world is excited about young leadership, but quite often young leaders make mistakes because they lack the wisdom of their elders. Unfortunately, amongst some young leaders there is a sense of triumphalism, which is closely associated with pride. There is an increasing tendency among young leaders to think of themselves as, "the generation that will

finally fix everything wrong with the ministry." The ministry is going one way, but they know better and they're leading it the other way. It is common knowledge that when we're young we tend to see ourselves as the super-hero in our own story – much like a 'Moses' that God has sent to rescue His people. While we would not desire to tamp down enthusiasm, drive or God-given ambition, we must remember that our story is not really our own. God is the pioneer of our story, and it is He who is after glory. The reality is that we're really not as influential or great as we think we are. This attitude consequently hurts the ministries of young leaders. They believe that the older generation knows little or nothing – are backward, intolerant, and unthinking and thankfully, the world now has the young leaders, who will finally fix the issues that the Christian ministry has been grappling with for years. To say the least, this is arrogance. It is an arrogance we often read about in many Christian periodicals and books. New theological ideas are being presented by young people in a very supercilious manner, "For many years this particular approach has not worked but we have now found a breakthrough to effective ministry ..." Why not just present your theory or hypothesis? I sense a particular tone of cheekiness and egotism that subscribes to the notion that "our generation" of young leaders will solve the challenges faced by the Church world-wide. However, Scripture is very clear that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (Jam 4:6; 1Pe 5:5; Pr 3:34). Inevitably, there is something impressive about new practices, new ideas, new arguments, and new approaches, but let not the young leaders be conceited enough to think that they have something their fathers didn't have. The reality is that the next generation will probably have its own list of errors which our generation of Christians has made. For all of us, the best we can do is to respect and honor the generations before us, even as we adapt and adjust our ministry to the 21st Century and beyond. Failure to honor past leadership is unbiblical. God, himself honors past leadership. To Joshua, he says, "I am the God of Moses ..." God used Moses in a unique way with the rod – for example Moses was told to raise the rod and stretch out his hand over the Red Sea to divide the waters so that the Israelites could go through the sea on dry ground. God was going to use Joshua in a different way. When the Israelites were faced with the Jordan River as they entered the Promised Land, Joshua had no rod he could use. God ordered that the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant be the first ones to step into the Jordan. As soon their feet touched the water edge the Jordan stopped flowing and Israel crossed on dry ground. When Joshua took over leadership he did not, even once, look down on or despise the leadership of Moses. Although Moses experienced failure in his leadership by striking the rock when God had told him

to speak to it, Joshua does not even make reference to it when speaking of Moses. Young leaders should learn not to despise failed leadership. God used them to build and grow the work. Young leaders stand on the shoulders of yester-years' leaders.

It is common to find that pride results in these young leaders not seeking a mentor or coach. While eager to prove their capabilities these young leaders should not be reluctant to seek counsel or accept advice. They should not wait for the seasoned leader to come their way, but they should actively seek the mentorship of such. We have already referred to the sad story of when King Rehoboam, son of King Solomon, refused to listen to the counsel of the wise old men who served with his father and instead listened to the advice of his young friends regarding an ultimatum from the people to lighten the tax load on the nation. We saw that his refusal to listen to the advice of the older men resulted in the division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah. It is sad that often, young leaders become smug, thinking they know better than the previous generation. Consequently, they only hang out with peers instead of having close relationships with those who have already paid the price with many years in the ministry.

Sometimes pride may lead a young leader to sever ties with their spiritual fathers and mothers when they enter into the ministry because they want to facilitate a different vision or philosophy of ministry. There is nothing wrong in having a different vision if this is the way the Lord is leading, but they should obey the spirit of the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12) and always honor those the Lord has used to nurture them spiritually and bring them to faith, even if they are no longer under their spiritual leadership. Remember, how you treat your spiritual fathers and mothers will be the way your spiritual sons and daughters treat you when they are older because, "Whatsoever you sow you will reap".

Sometimes pride comes about as a result of having zeal without knowledge and operating in presumption. Many young ministers exhibit great passion and compelling vision that is not very well thought out. They start with a bang and sooner or later fade away like a whisper. It is possible for people to operate in a passion for God without knowledge (Rom 10:2). The Psalmist was wary of this sin and prayed, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression (Ps 19:13 KJV). We have to be in tune with the voice and will of the Lord which can only be fully discerned, in most cases, in the context of the church with other trusted leaders who will give each other honest and trusted feedback.

It is not unusual to see elements of pride in some young leaders who are totally driven by ambition and a need to succeed more than by a desire

to serve for the glory of God. I heard someone once say that during the first half of our lives we are driven to succeed while during the second half we are driven to be significant by pouring into others and leaving a legacy. I have been there myself as a young leader in my twenties. I wanted to succeed in my leadership at all costs. There was the temptation of accomplishing something great and making a mark in the world. I believe this is because we are influenced by a culture that subscribes to the belief that our self-worth is derived from our "doing" and not out of a healthy self-image of "being." As I approached my late forties I came to the realization that all of my accomplishments were not really as satisfying as I thought they would be. All that really matters in the end is what I do for the glory of God that empowers the people of God.

Sometimes this drive of ambition and the desperate need to succeed on a grand scale, leads young leaders to view every person in their fellowship as mere objects to get them or their ministries to the next level. This explains why some leaders badmouth those in their congregations or ministry and treat them with indifference and disdain. Surely this is dishonoring to the Lord, because every person has value as an image-bearer of God, and because Christ shed His blood for each and every person in our midst, whether we deem them important to our vision or not. Leaders are called upon to love, honor and respect each and every person whether or not they will ever be used to help serve the leaders in fulfilling the vision the Lord has given them. Young leaders who are motivated by success and popularity are always looking for the next big adventure on their agendas. It is no wonder that they rarely engage meaningfully with the world of those they are ministering to; during the moments they are with one person they are already thinking about the next person they have to meet or the next thing they have to do on their agendas. The result is that they get stressed and are robbed of the joy of God's presence in the routines of each moment of their lives.

Sometimes pride manifests itself in the young leader insisting that they teach or preach what has not yet been personally experienced or encountered with God. I know of a young leader who taught a lot on what he had not yet practiced in his life. Everyone on his team knew very well that there were certain subjects in which he was not able to minister with authority. He prided himself as an authority in teaching on marriage and raising children when he was not married and had no children. This made him open to hypocrisy and compartmentalization. I know of many young pastors and leaders like him. In cases like this, it would be better for young leaders to bring in spiritual and married ministers to teach on these subjects that take a lifetime to learn well, instead of trying to teach these subjects superficially themselves. I am not advancing the teaching that there

are no single people who are well placed to teach on these subjects. The apostle Paul was probably not married and yet he gives clear and helpful instructions on subjects like marriage and raising children. The point I am trying to make us appreciate is that we should be careful with young leaders who may claim to be experts on subjects that are best dealt with by those with personal experience and necessary maturity.

It is not uncommon to see that pride may lead to someone craving for fame. Wanting fame is a serious pitfall among both young and old leaders. However, we must appreciate that fame in itself is not inherently wrong. I know of many leaders whom God has allowed to gain favour and their ministries have borne much fruit to the glory of God, such as the late Billy Graham. The pursuance of fame is problematic for some young leaders. Every leader must die to the desire to be famous. There is a thin line between desiring our ministry to grow and pursuing popularity. The reality is that the more the Lord blesses the work or ministry, the more famous you become as a leader. Each leader must be able to discern and ask themselves before the Lord where that line lies. Each individual leader must guard and check their heart to see if their motivations for ministry are to glorify God and serve His people or to bolster their own egos and enrich themselves.

Anti-Establishment

We are living at a time when the anti-authority mood as well as the anti-establishment culture is rife. Individualism is now widely applauded. People groups or individuals make their own rules to live by as they get along in life with little or no regard for others. The tenets of post-modernism affect and influence the leadership styles or philosophy of many young leaders in our contemporary world. Sometimes this anti-establishment tendency may be shaped or influenced by the experiences at home, in church, school and community that affected the young leader in a negative way. For example, if a young leader experienced some form of oppression or abuse by any of these institutions they may in later life, if not well counseled, develop some form of rebellion against any establishment.

I have often counseled young leaders to come to grips with the parts of their upbringing or past that they would like to do differently in their own leadership environments and so avoid hurting their effectiveness by filtering everything they do through the prism of what they considered was wrong in their upbringing. Young leaders with such a background often become reactionary and imbalanced. The danger is that they become a movement defined more by being against what they perceive as wrong than being for what God has called them to do and become.

Beware of neglecting Emotional, Family & Spiritual Needs

Mwansa received a phone call from the Missions Director in his organization notifying him of his appointment as assistant director for the Missions Department. A week later, his appointment letter was delivered to him. Mwansa and his young family relocated to Lusaka to take up the appointment. His organization had more than 50 missionaries serving in various capacities in eleven countries in Africa. Mwansa's appointment was expected because he had proved himself as a dedicated and faithful worker in the last five years that he had served in the organization. This had been his dream.

In the first year of his appointment Mwansa was focused only on accomplishments, mission and activities while neglecting his interior life. As a natural achiever, Mwansa was task oriented. He neglected his prayer life as well as the serious study of God's word due to what he referred to as a "busy ministry schedule". Mwansa almost thrived and found his significance in being busy. He also tended to over-emphasize the development of his gifts and abilities which sometimes placed him in high-pressure situations of responsibility that exceeded his character capacity. This consequently resulted in spiritual and emotional meltdown. Mwansa experienced severe spiritual and emotional leakage in his work which negatively affected his family and key relationships. He developed a dependence on unhealthy things to medicate himself and alleviate the pressure. He resorted to illicit relationships, drinking and inordinate amounts of time on social networking websites like Facebook. Mwansa had forgotten one rule of thumb: to build our lives upon the foundation of character development (2Pe 1:5-9) and not upon the faulty foundation of gifts and abilities.

In his quest to succeed, Mwansa put so much emphasis on his schedules that he neglected precious time with his spouse and children. It is very common among leaders that in their attempt to win the world, they often lose their very own children and marriages. This is especially common among young leaders. This explains why many children of leaders never want to be involved in full-time ministry and very rarely attend church or serve God once they reach their late teens. It is recommended that young leaders work their schedules and calendars around spending good quality time with their families. When they have strong families then God can build into them a multi-generational family blessing that will be a model for their churches, each of which is really a family of families. As a young leader Mwansa was naïve about the price tag associated with his dream. There is a price tag associated with ministry, leadership and success. He should have been trained and prepared to count the cost much earlier in his ministry if he was to succeed.

Avoid an Ego Trip

Let us suppose that your character, skills and gifting have been recognized and you have been given a new leadership role. There is no doubt you will feel good and excited about the tasks ahead of you. You may also feel a bit overwhelmed when starting in a new position. As you embark on the task and reality sets in you will realize that being a leader is hard work. Other people may resent the fact that you got the appointment and he or she didn't. Some will feel that you are too young. Your former team-members start treating you differently and everybody has an idea about how you could do your job better.

You must be careful to guard your ego. The problem is that your ego may be telling you that you are better than you really are. You got recognized and your ego got stroked. You may be rest assured that you will not get far if you carry on as if your ideas are the only good ones and your job the only important one. Leadership is about teamwork. Your responsibility is to pull people together as a team toward the fulfillment of the ministry vision. If you have difficult people on your team you may wish to consult others for advice. You are also likely to face resentment from older colleagues. This is more common in the African culture than elsewhere: Why should someone nearly twice your age follow your leadership? You will need to address issues head-on with pre-emptive empathy and grace. It is important to acknowledge the talents of older workers and recognize that their advice and contribution is welcome, while being clear about your ministry priorities and plans. True leadership is not about power or status. It is about respect. Where there is no respect, there is no trust. In the absence of trust, co-operative work becomes impossible and results plummet. In your pursuit to become or remain a young leader, never lose sight of the importance of respect. If you do respect the opinions and work of those around you and earn their respect in return, you are well on your way to becoming a true leader.

Learn to Take Criticism

As a young leader, I recall that the leadership team of my local church were faced with a challenge and had decided to spend time in prayer over some weeks. I thought to myself, "Surely, should we spend time to pray so we would know God's will about whether we should change and get rid of the old set of Hymn books and embrace the new Song books which had just been produced and were being used widely by some churches!". As far as I was concerned, this was a straightforward issue that did not need the

intervention of the Holy Spirit. I unwisely used the pulpit to argue my case. Unbeknown to me I had offended some elderly church members who had grown up singing from the old Hymn books. After the service two of the elders pulled me aside and criticized and corrected me. I was offended. I tried hard to justify my position. I was wrong in the way I had gone about handling this issue and the two elders were right, but I did not take kindly to criticism. I leant my lesson!

The fact is nobody likes to receive criticism and even the most thick-skinned leader will often be wounded by it. We must remember that the more successful we are, the more criticism will be directed our way. Thankfully, many of us have not had to endure what many more gifted and prominent leaders have in terms of public and stinging rebukes. I'm not sure how we handle those. I have observed, though, that there is a predisposition among some young, successful, ministry leaders to shut out *all* forms of criticism. Sometimes this reaction may be due to the fact that they have been wounded by insensitive and nasty people who offer less than gracious rebuke. However, it must be remembered that it is a mistake to shut it all out and to adopt what I call, "a finger-in-the-ear response". If we listen closely and honestly, often there is value in the criticism we are hearing. In many cases, the individual issuing it is not a "hater," but a lover, who wishes to see your ministry grow and prosper and for lives to be transformed. Nevertheless, we must avoid establishing a culture of unwarranted and undeserved criticism as such, because over the long haul, this leads to a dangerous ministry culture. Of course, there does need to be a filter, and not all voices need to be heeded, but leaders also need to be as wise as King David, who had the humility to listen when the prophet Nathan pointed the finger at him and said, "You are the man." I would implore all young leaders to have persons in their lives who have the authority to say that to them.

Start Small & Prioritize Leadership Development

Mwape was a gifted young leader. His mother church had sent him over to Lusaka to plant a church. Mwape was a visionary and an achiever. He was determined that within the first two years he would grow his congregation to over 150 people. His vision was to grow his church into one of the biggest congregations in the city. Unfortunately, after two years Mwape had not more than 25 adults in the church. He soon became disillusioned. It was not that he did not work hard. He did. He spent hours in prayer together with two leaders. He fasted and read every book he could lay his hands on about church growth. His congregation made prayer a priority. Young leaders are often in hurry to 'make things happen'. Often this

expectation is elusive. Mwape, while trying to grow the church, missed an important aspect of developing leadership.

The reality of life is such that most things don't start big. They start small. While Mwape wanted to see his church grow, nothing *stunted the growth of the church faster than inadequate leadership development.* This is a mistake almost every young leader makes. Mwape did not prioritize leadership development, and it was no wonder there wasn't much growth in the church. He tried to do too much by himself as he was later to admit after learning about leadership development. He confessed that he had missed the potential of the ministry God had given him. He admitted that where there was potential growth he kept hitting unnecessary growth barriers. As he reflected on his first years of leadership he commented, "I used recruiting leaders as a substitute for developing leaders**.** I recruited but did not develop high-capacity leaders and this created an artificial growth barrier. I now know that if you only recruit but don't develop the people you engage, they do not develop. If you desire to release the energies and gifts of the people in your ministry and realize its potential, don't just recruit: my advice is *developing the people you recruit.* I could only do so much. The capacity of a team of well-equipped leaders is much greater than the capacity of any single person. I was afraid to release leadership to others". Mwape added, "I also had to articulate the expectations clearly enough in order to avoid frustrating my leaders so they could see the goal I wanted them to achieve". It is important for the young leader to know what happens when he fails to clearly articulate expectations. Everybody gets frustrated. The leader gets frustrated as well because people aren't hitting an unseen and unarticulated target. They get frustrated because they're not even clear on what they should be doing. The best they can do is to make up their own rules and are shocked when you tell them they're missing the mark – a mark which you never bothered to articulate in the first place. Indeed, inadequate leadership development can be problematic.

In order to avoid a scenario such as the one highlighted above, the young leader should aim at ***training leaders and not just teaching them.*** Here is the difference: *teaching* people tells them what to do while *training* gives them what they need to do it. Our natural tendency is to teach, not to train. We must be intentional about growing past that. You see, *training* helps leaders acquire the skills they need to do what you've asked them to do. It goes beyond providing the knowledge base they need and gives them time to practice, to get better, and drills into specifics like ensuring they have the technical tools and skills they may require accomplishing their mission. The focus should be on training because training sets other leaders up to succeed, whereas teaching alone can leave them struggling.

Mwape now speaks of how he had to clarify parameters to his leaders, in writing. He says he had to have a clearly articulated ministry, vision, strategy and values set out in writing. He says that he even had to go beyond that. He created a position description for every leader that clearly outlined what to do. Furthermore, Mwape, with the help of others developed a mentoring program for key leaders. As he mentored the other leaders, Mwape helped them to grow as people as much as leaders. They shared life together around a common cause. And in the process of mentoring, Mwape imparted the DNA of his ministry. I recall Mwape confess, "When you are in a leadership position from a young age, as I was, it becomes a part of you, in those fundamental years when I was forming my identity. I became ego-centric and heeded not to temptations. The great temptation was that decisions became more about me than the ministry. Be assured, you can't lead from that position. A spiritual leader knows how to raise their team up. The leader walks beside or behind their team, not in front". Today, Mwape is one of the leaders of the fastest growing church in Lusaka and has a team of over 50 ministry leaders from his church and the other church plants.

Exercise patience

Someone once said, "Patience is the support of weakness; impatience the ruin of strength". In our contemporary world the word 'instant' is one of the favourites in our vocabularies. Everyone wants instant coffee and instant this or that ... We thought the invention of the microwave would speed up the process of cooking meals. We were wrong. We now wished we could have food cooked in seconds. Queuing up for a product or serving is becoming old fashioned. Even boarding and disembarking an aircraft is problematic. People want to be first to get on the plane as well as first to get off. We are always in a hurry, and one often wonders to where it is we are hurrying. Young leaders are particular culprits in the leading of hurried lifestyles.

It is a well-known that young leaders achieve so much in so little time that winning fast becomes a habit for them. But the reality of life is that not all boxing matches can be won in the first two or three rounds with a knock-out sucker punch. To win the matches of life requires patience, strength and certainly 'attitude'. Experience teaches us that these are major factors if we are to emerge as winners. Lack of patience at times contributes to many young leaders taking a decision without proper due diligence. The process of due diligence may include researching, reading, discussing with experts, wider consultation and taking into account the

voices of the team. Even if the young leader may have the gift of intuition which may help them to rapidly discern and grasp the various aspects of the matter, there is still no alternative to a thought-through decision, arrived at after musing over multiple options. For this to happen, patience is required. Unfortunately, a number of young leaders lack this virtue. I know of some who have had to learn the hard way –after facing a series of defeats and setbacks. I am aware that there are situations when the right mix of patience and impatience may be required, but the challenge for the young is to discern the right balance.

The following story of Pastor Moomba illustrates clearly the need for patience and how a young leader can go about dealing with an old generation of leaders. When Moomba first became a pastor at 26 years of age, everyone on his leadership team was at least twelve years older than he. As a matter of fact, his congregation had more elderly people than young ones. He recalls how for the first ten years of his pastoral ministry he was faced with leading older generations. He wondered how he could earn their respect and get "buy-in" from those who didn't always like getting direction from a leader who was as young as their own children. Fortunately, Moomba had been well mentored and taught before he took up this new role.

He speaks of how as a young leader he had to be mindful that the older folk had seen his youthful enthusiasm before and had typically "heard it all before" and some may have desired to see him fail. Moomba had also been made aware that he needed to be prepared for the envy that ensues as many of the older folk would feel threatened by him or even cheated for not being considered for the leadership position he was in. It was for this reason that Moomba had to become a good leader quickly. There were times when he learnt to throw his authority out the door, eliminate the hierarchy and become just another member of the team, and help get the job done. Moomba recalls how he had to build relationships, earn trust and allowed his leadership to arise organically. "I realized that my ultimate leadership role was to facilitate my team to perform and get them recognized in new ways: this resonated with my youthful creativity", Moomba recalls.

Young leaders do need to be reminded that older generations want them to respect their ideas and ideals. It is crucial that older generation know that they have a voice and their contribution is highly valued and respected while making their responsibilities much more meaningful and purposeful. It is important that this happens right away because your first three months on the job is where you are being tested and evaluated by your older folk. Remember that these folks have scorecards. Therefore, in

order to score high, ask the right questions, work the extra hours, and carefully evaluate their work and past performance in the organization. Learn from them and educate yourself about their journeys. It is highly recommended that you know who you are leading and never take for granted that your older team members will do what you say just because you are their leader. Until they become convinced that you are qualified to be their leader and you are working for the best interests of the ministry and the team, they may make your job difficult. You have to earn their respect. Whether you like it or not the older folk have much more influence and power at the beginning of your tenure than you do because they bring with them a history of organizational relationships that carry more weight and influence. Always appreciate that managing older generations in ministry requires patience. You will have to bear in mind that you will have to learn the old ways of doing ministry before you can apply new ideas.

Make Listening and Learning a Priority

A few years ago, the Lord called my wife Eve and me into a new ministry. We had been involved in training and raising leaders and missionaries for over 25 years. The new ministry required us to develop leaders as well as prepare folk for mission. While the focus for these two mission organizations was identical, the modus operandi was different. It would have been very naïve of us to assume that we knew everything about developing leaders as well as preparing and training missionaries. A good friend of mine gave me this advice years ago. "When you find yourself in a new place or serving in another ministry you must focus on the four 'L's namely: Look, Learn, Listen and List" before you begin to act. Good counsel!

Similarly, for the upcoming young leaders my encouragement to them is, be an active listener and learn from their older peers. Authority must be earned and thus it is important that they keenly observe how their older colleagues operate and function. The young leader must be able to identify the team's strengths, personality traits and areas that could use refinement. Additionally, the young leader should listen to the types of questions seniors ask in meetings. It may be helpful to observe whether seniors take notes and have good follow-up. Pay attention to what you can specifically learn from each member of the team. Encourage yourself to acknowledge the lessons learned from your senior colleagues by applying what they have taught you. Additionally, make sure that you identify the areas for improvement where your input can make an immediate difference in their performance.

Be Interested in Your Team at a Personal Level

I was still very young when I was asked to give leadership to my fellow elders at our local church. I had four elders and three deacons working with me in a fellowship of just over 250 people. All the other elders were much older than me and had families. I had just married then. I dedicated the first year to making a genuine effort to get to know them personally. For instance, we had all the elders for a meal at least twice in the year. We went out to social functions together. My wife and I visited their homes on a regular basis and built relationships with their spouses and children. We got interested in their careers and often prayed with them when they had an issue from their workplaces. It was amazing how these leaders embraced us and became very open to us. As a matter of fact, there is a lot that we learnt about ourselves and ministry as we related to them. Two of the leaders opened up and said that they had worked with young leaders in their professions who never gave them the time of day, nor did they seem to care about what mattered most to them – their families.

It was humbling to hear them later confess that they initially thought I was going to be another young know-it-all leader – and based on their past experiences, (in the companies they worked for) that was going to be a difficult situation to handle. My mentor counseled me to be very intentional about making serious investment in and commitment to my leaders. I did this not only for the church, but more so as a means to understand them as people and as parents. For every leader their family matters most; hence I had to get to know what that meant from their perspective so that I could learn how most effectively and authentically to lead them and help them to be more successful than ever before.

I am aware that sometimes this may be difficult in certain church cultures, but still a young leader must invest his time to get to know the members of his team on a personal level. Getting to know your team personally helps to break down potential barriers and also allows the older teammembers to get to know you. It is important that as a young leader you be transparent and show them who you really are. Do not be hypocritical or superficial. Bear in mind that this works both ways; this will make them curious about who you are and what matters to you. It is vital that you just be yourself and have an open-door policy. Avoid exercising the authority of your title unless it is absolutely necessary. Remember always to keep it simple and create an environment that is engaging, warm, loving, transparent and non-threatening.

Be Accommodating and Accept Differences.

Different people; different strokes. People are different and they have different perspectives on life and inevitably they have different perceptions on issues. To embrace differences is to celebrate God's manifold wisdom in creation. Difference does not necessarily mean wrong. In fact, one of the character traits of a young leader is that they can be very adaptive and accommodating. Now that you have taken on a new leadership role as a young leader it is recommended that you make the transition of thought easier for your older team members to accept. Young leaders do not need to be reminded that traditions matter to the older generations. Please be wary of this not just for your older team members, but for the good of the organization or church you are serving. Often, a young leader is eager to introduce new ideas and reinvent the older ways of thinking. The result would be resistance. Why? Because you have not paid enough attention to the historical dynamics that existed within the organization or church and between its people. You must heed the traditions that were embedded in the ministry's culture and how people applied them to their work.

You will therefore certainly need wisdom, and you will have to be strategic in blending your new ways of thinking with their current ways. You must always bear in mind that one of your responsibilities is to help make them more successful and this requires you to help them continuously learn and grow. Simply be a good leader, not an entitlement chaser. It is advisable that you be respectful of how they think and get creative in assisting the older generations understand why your new ways of thinking make sense. Do not be in a hurry; point them to some examples and learn to negotiate.

Focus More on Respect and Not Authority

Once I asked a group of church leaders what treatment they most wanted from their seniors and co-workers at work. Top on the list was that they be treated with dignity and with respect. Respect is when one feels admiration and deep regard for an individual. It is when you believe that the person is worthy of your regard and admiration because of the good qualities and capabilities that they bring to the ministry. Your respect for others is evidenced in many ways. One of them is that you will need to act in a way that shows you are aware of your team members as people who deserve respect. Inevitably, you will have to recognize that they have rights, opinions, wishes, experience, and competence. Young leaders will have to treat people with courtesy, politeness, and kindness. They will have to be

aware of their body language, their tone of voice, and their demeanor and expression in all of their interactions as they serve the Lord together.

It is possible that as a young leader you may draw authority from multiple sources in addition to your official position. There's nothing wrong with having power, but you must bear in mind that it is ever so easy to abuse it. Abuse includes humiliating others, threatening others, intimidating others or possibly coercing others. Indeed, abuse manifests in many different ways; some are obvious and some subtle. Some leaders appear nice when they're face to face with you and then stab you in the back later. An insecure young leader may become a control freak and will use their power to micromanage or unreasonably restrict others' ability to do anything without their approval. A wise young leader will ensure that he or she wins the respect of others.

Respect takes time to earn and should not be forced. Respect is not something you should demand or command. It will appear as you become part of the team and take responsibility for your actions and learn to hold yourself accountable and let others hold you accountable. It is important that your older colleagues see that you are being respectful within your role. Your team members want to know that your intentions are pure, honest and true. Here is the punch line: learn to care more about your team and less about your power. It is critical that as a young leader, you embrace generational differences and be a good student. Always remember that the older generations have the wisdom that younger generations are still acquiring. A young leader who focuses more on respect than power is one who cares about his responsibilities, is grateful for the opportunity to lead and sets forth a foundation based on trust, teamwork, integrity and transparency.

How Can the Older Generation Set Up Young People for Success?

I once heard someone say, "When the old are not allowed to tell their story, the young grow up without history. When the young are not listened to, we lose unique ideas and have no future". How true! In working together young people and the older generation bring tremendous benefits to their communities as well as gain an appreciation for one another. But the generation gap these days is more like a canyon and this poses a challenge to working with each other. People who grow up at different points in history have a unique experience and outlook toward life. It's always been that way and will mostly likely continue so. Different generations nearly always

tend to misunderstand each other. We have the 'Millennials' who are multitasked, connected and need instant gratification and recognition. They also expect a more flexible work environment and are collaborating and transparent. We also have Generations X and Y. These are a generation that grew up in an era of emerging technology and political and institutional incompetence. Generation X and Y generally focuses on autonomy and self-reliance, rather than respect for authority. Gen X-ers are entrepreneurial-thinking. Then we have the "Baby Boomers". This generation make good team players and is loyal but doesn't adapt so well. Boomers rank the lowest when it comes to being adaptable and collaborative. A general understanding of the characteristics of each generation may be helpful when working with young people.

Strive to Understand and Give them Challenges

The older leaders play a major role in ensuring that the young leader is successful in his role. Needless to say it is always difficult adjusting to a new job or culture. Young leaders will have to be motivated. Gen X and Yers grew up being motivated. They will need to be praised along the way to the end goal. You will have to learn to celebrate the small victories on the road to success. I am from the 'Baby Boomers' generation and we like having short-, medium- and long-term plans for the ministry. I have made a strange discovery among many young leaders. While you talk about five-year plans; their plan in five years is to have a new plan. And we must not be shocked when we discover that their plan most likely will not involve you or your ministry. They thrive in being given short, tight deadlines.

Something we must appreciate about Gen X and Yers is that they want to be challenged. This is a generation that thrives on conquering challenges. Life is boring without a challenge, and no one can grow without it. It is how we grow and anyone who is going to do anything significant wants to be challenged. Any leader who struggles with challenge will almost certainly also struggle with surrounding himself or herself with the type of leaders that can change the world. Young people do not want to serve or work for the boring, plain, and mediocre leaders that will often make them feel warm and special and rarely actually go out and accomplish anything. Young people need challenges.

Gen X and Yers do not just want to be challenged with words, but most importantly by the responsibility that they are given. I think that older leaders have to stop saying they believe in someone, and actual believe in them by letting the young leaders take ownership of something for which an older leader is responsible. We must learn that one of the best tools we

have for growing young leaders is our willingness to let them have some true responsibility. Let us be honest here: true responsibility does not tell the young leaders that they are responsible for something, and then we go behind them to micro-manage them to make sure it doesn't fail. There may be times when the young leaders don't follow through. Yes, if it fails, we have to examine why and perhaps take the blame. The buck stops with you. It is said that a great leader gives the credit and takes the blame.

When everything has been said and done, the manner in which we raise up leaders is going to determine the long term health and stability of our ministry. We should not be content to have a lot of young people that admire us and fail to push them to grow to be better leaders than ourselves. Failure to challenge young people to grow as leaders is a good recipe for the downfall of our ministry. We must, therefore, be willing and able to put in the time and effort to raise up the young leaders that we know God has made to be great. We must walk through the process with them over time and give them real challenges and opportunities to learn. In this way we can be assured of vibrant ministry for the future.

Positive Use of Words

Experience has shown that, often when it comes to young people, there is nothing more powerful than the words that we share with them. Words such as, "I trust you ... I have confidence in you ... I sense that God has gifted you in ... You don't realize just how good you are in the area of ...". As elderly people we have the ability to inspire, challenge, build up, and tear down. For instance, years ago when I began to develop leaders, I realized that my words began to carry a lot of weight when it came to the young leaders that I was working with. I was concerned that I even had influence over the decisions they made in regard to where they would serve or lead within the Body of Christ. I did not deliberately set out to do this, but it happened by default as we interacted and in our conversations. This was an eye-opener for me for I learned rapidly that one of the best ways of setting someone on the path of success is to use words and not to try to lead them to what we think they should do or to serve us. By all means try to encourage them to follow what Jesus is calling them to do. I strongly suspect that as leaders, God will often give us insight into how he has gifted the young people around us and that is why we have to make sure that we are first and foremost listening to God. My experience has been that when I spend time with the Lord on a regular basis, I am more likely to see people as Christ sees them. Consequently, I am able to see God-given potential to speak into them. I have

seen disastrous consequences when I tried to use my words to persuade young people to do what I wanted them to do or what made the most sense in the worldly way of looking at things. This proved a recipe for disaster in their leadership path.

There is nothing as powerful and as encouraging when an older leader sees the gifts and purpose God has placed inside of a young person and begins to speak that into them. It is for this reason that our relationship with the Lord Jesus is foundational in our ability and discernment to raise up those around us. It is impossible to lead someone to a place that we are not going ourselves. We need to truly love and place young people in front of ourselves and we can only accomplish this if we are hearing from the Lord on a regular basis.

Exercise Patience with Young Leaders

In our contemporary world of instant results and gratification, patience is a leadership skill that every leader must practice. Patience is a virtue and is an easy thing to talk about, but it is extremely difficult to practice. It certainly often lacks among most of today's leaders. The world expects those in charge to take action quickly and decisively. Pressure from those around a leader for action may cause others to criticize and condemn a leader's perceived inaction or lack of speed. It is a common pattern that people will first demand action. Then they will demand results. Experience shows that the greater the crisis, the greater the impatience. Godly leaders recognize that patience enables them to take stock of the situation, to understand what is required, and wait while they build the capacity to take appropriate and effective action. After all, patience is the fruit of the Spirit. They wait upon God for direction and wisdom. Many tasks associated with leadership, such as people development require patience. It is therefore very important that when a leader is dealing with young people in leadership, they exercise patience. People do not mature overnight. They must be given space to grow and develop. In the process they might make mistakes. Any mistake made in the quest to do the right thing provides a good learning experience for the young leader.

As human beings we commonly overvalue what God wants to do in the short-term and undervalue what God wants to do in the long-term. This is particularly the case when it comes to raising up young leaders. The temptation is for the leader to be so focused on how he wants to see people grow in the short-term that he forgets that they have a whole lifetime ahead of them for God to grow them as leaders. This life experience is a marathon, not a sprint. You cannot develop leaders at Usian Bolt speed.

The leader must be very careful that he does not so focus on the short-term that any mistake that an upcoming young leader makes feels like it has doomed their ability to lead. A fact of life is that young leaders are going to make mistakes. As a matter of fact, all leaders will make mistakes. You have made mistakes before. You must be aware that when it comes to young leaders, it is not only probable that they will make mistakes, it is necessary for them to make mistakes in order to learn how to grow past them and past failure and so become the man or woman that God has called them to be. Hence, in developing young leaders, you are not trying to see a young man or woman do a lot of great exploits or have a lot of accomplishments in the short-term (though this is always welcome), but rather you are interested in investing in people in such a way that they are still loving Jesus, and loving and leading others well in years to come. Patience with young leaders will help you not to overreact when someone you are trying to raise up as a leader makes a mistake. Patience enables us to lead by showing someone grace rather than trying to make guilt the motivator for doing what we wish them to do. I want to believe grace is a much greater motivator for the young people we are raising up than trying to make them feel guilty when they don't live up to our expectations

Give Young Leaders Room to Grow and Lead

The former tradition in Africa was that leaders should be old people. Now, that's an old idea. Fading slowly are the days when it used to be that leadership was equated with age, years of accomplishment, high flying academic accomplishment, and privileged family background. The spiritual cost of not recognizing young people as leaders has been significant. The trend to keep younger people subordinated has been a drain on innovation, invention, and fruitfulness in ministry. The truth is that true leadership knows no age limit. Leaders are people of any age group who can perform or deliver. These are the kind of people who grab your attention, take the initiative, are compelling, and model good leadership.

I recall sometime back reading a story in which John Piper, an American Pastor, preached on the young man Elihu from Job 32:7-11. His sermon was entitled, "Let the Young Speak." Piper, himself was a young man then. It was on the occasion when the church was ordaining 27-year-old Tom Steller, and Piper wanted to prepare his congregation of gray heads for laying hands on such a spring chicken. Piper's key verses were from Job 32:8-9. "It is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. It is not the old who are wise, nor the aged who understand what is right", said Piper. The lesson Elihu teaches us here is that it is not

age that brings wisdom but the Spirit of God. There is no necessary correlation between gray hair and good theology. The message was very clear that it removed age as the dominant consideration in deciding who is wise and understanding. There may be folly in the old and folly in the young; wisdom in the young and wisdom in the old. When we search for a source of wisdom, we do not end our search with the question, "How old is he?" We end it with the question, "Who has the Spirit of wisdom and understanding?"

The Christian vision for leadership is not necessarily a tenure model in which the individual who has been around longest occupies the seats of privilege and prominence as long as they want. True biblical leadership is about laboring pro-actively and assertively to raise up younger leaders to fill the old leaders' slot and do their job better than the old leadership. This is part of making disciples. It applies both to the church and to leadership generally. Admittedly, such a vision of leadership is costly in that one person's emerging influence is always another person's waning influence. That's why making room for the young eagles is challenging, especially to those who are already well established and have large influence. We can laugh at our politicians where such a deferential and self-humbling dream for raising up new leaders may seem far-fetched, but shouldn't it have its best chance in the church, where we follow one who came not to be served, but to serve? It has been observed that a determination not to bring young leaders into leadership is one of the main reasons that most churches, around the 20-year mark, stop growing and lose their evangelistic touch and cultural relevance. It is therefore of paramount importance, if you have young adults who have leadership potential in your circle of influence, that you mentor and nurture them and give them room to lead. Yes, they will make mistakes make some mistakes, but remember, they will also make a difference.

Some Biblical and Secular Examples of Godly Young People

Let me begin this section by first giving two examples from the world of technology of young people who changed the face of the world. Very likely no adult gave these young people a chance, let alone a thought that they would use their ingenuity in ways that would revolutionize the world of technology. These are young people who were *innovators* – a typical trend among most young people. Let me talk about Mark Zuckerberg. He was in his early 20s when he and four University colleagues

launched Facebook. Three years after launching, perhaps the largest social networking program, he was a billionaire. By the time he was 26, Mark was named *Time* magazine's Person of the Year. My second example is that of Sergey Brin and Larry Page. These two were only 21 and 22 respectively when they met at Stanford University. Larry had been schooled at the University of Michigan while Sergey was the Stanford student assigned to orient him around the campus. Their paths crossed with each other and within a year they were working together on a search engine called BackRub. Even before they had reached their mid-20s they registered the domain name Google.com. They continued to work out of their garage office. But these young people had a bold vision to change the world. The rest is history. Today, Google's net worth is in billions of dollars. One cannot underrate the potential, gifts and talents that God has invested in young people.

The Bible is filled with narratives of young adults who were called by God to make a difference in their generation. The Bible presents many young people of integrity who in seeking God overcame incredible odds to great victories. David as a young man slew Goliath with one stone. Esther and Ruth were young women in impossible situations but managed to be used of God because of their integrity and humility. Joseph was probably under eighteen when sold into slavery by his brothers, but he became a mighty tool in the hands of God because of his godliness. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were likely also teenagers when threatened to be thrown in a furnace to a fiery death if they did not worship the image king Nebuchadnezzar had erected. The three young men could not compromise. That is integrity. In the New Testament we read of Timothy, a young adult but still quite young amidst his peers, who was passed the torch to pastor the Church at Ephesus by the Apostle Paul. Jesus Christ our Lord, himself, at twelve years old went to the temple courts and openly challenged the religious leaders. What we need today is not young leaders only but young godly leaders with integrity to take leadership responsibilities and roles. We do not want young leaders who lack in wisdom and try to make up for it in energy and optimism. Jesus was 30 when He began His ministry, and He intentionally made room for young leaders. For the most part, His disciples were not a group of senior statesmen, but young adults. Some may have been in their twenties; most scholars believe that some of the disciples were under the age of 18. It is clear that during their ministry with Jesus, the twelve disciples made their fair share of mistakes. But after three and a half years ministering with Jesus, God would use them to write the New Testament and to build His Church.

Needed: Biblical Leader-Makers

The absence of intentionality among older leaders to mentor and develop young leaders is one of the major causes of the scarcity of a well-balanced breed of young leaders. I have spent many years running leadership development programs and activities with the aim of preparing and equipping older leaders as well as facilitating the development and equipping of upcoming young leaders by the senior leaders. In the African context where I normally serve, I have often met with the following sentiments by the older leaders, "But young people are very irresponsible and cannot be trusted". I do not know whether these leaders realize that by this they actually admit their failure to prepare new leadership for the continued growth of their ministries. We need older leaders with the spirit of Barnabas. There are hundreds of Pauls around us who need a Barnabas to get alongside them.

The relationship between Paul and Barnabas (Ac 9-15) was a very interesting one from which we can draw many lessons on how to facilitate the development of biblical leaders. The account as given to us in Acts points to Barnabas as a biblical leader-maker. While it is true that only God can make a leader, nevertheless he uses human instruments to do so. As a biblical leader-maker, Barnabas was willing to take risks on behalf of a potential leader – Paul. Barnabas had a good eye and a glad heart for the potential of grace. It seemed that Barnabas had his heat sensors adjusted and alert for embers of grace that he could fan, while the others, it seems, had their buckets of criticism ready to pour on the ashes of imperfection in Paul. It is this good eye and a glad heart for the potential of grace that made Barnabas fade into the background while pushing Paul into prominence. Barnabas was not addicted to the praise of men and did not crave the limelight. What a humble and self-effacing leader he was. Old leaders, similarly, must look for young people with better gifts than their own and push them forward. Barnabas did not fall into the pitfall of comparison which many young leaders are guilty of. He could not compare himself with Paul. Barnabas had his own gifts, and the Apostle Paul was uniquely gifted. Barnabas was secure in his own gifts and abilities that the Lord had graciously endowed him with. In a world where competition is the established norm even among Christian ministers, there is a dangerous tendency to compare and measure us against our peers. Ministers compare numbers with other workers and compare their sermons with the sermons of those they admire. Comparison is deadly because it blinds one to God's unique purpose for each individual life. Hence, we must put it to death daily.

Conclusion

Both the young and older generations have a significant role to play in the Kingdom of God. The young have the energy, enthusiasm, and drive but also understand their contemporary world a lot better than the old. However, the old have the experience and wisdom and the passion. And a combination of all these virtues is critical if the church or the para-church organization is to realize its vision and potential. The young people are not to be referred to as the 'Leaders of tomorrow", they are the leaders of today even as they are being trained, mentored and coached by the older generation. The fulfillment of the Great Commission will take the active participation and collaboration of all age groups in order to be realized. God is not a respecter of a particular age group. God uses an individual, irrespective of age – anyone whose heart is sold out to Him and His purposes.

Case Study

Mapenzi, a 27-year-old single young lady, graduated from Bible College 3 years ago with a degree in Church Leadership. She is a bright, knowledgeable and passionate person. Recently she was appointed by her Church Council to lead the Young People and Ladies Ministries. She is well loved by the young people but has a tough time with the ladies older than her. Her brilliant ideas are often short-down by the other ladies. She has brought this challenge to the attention of the Church Council. The Council has asked that they be given time to look into the issue. It has been 5 months since she brought up this matter and Mapenzi is getting frustrated. Two of the most difficult ladies are wives to the members of the Council. What are the issues here? How would you assist both Mapenzi and the Council?

Memory Verse

"Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (1Tim 4:11-12 NIV).

Chapter 3: Spiritual Abuse

"Mind control is built on lies and manipulation of attachment needs."
(Valerie Sinason)

"But he is the man of God", Mubanga retorted. "I don't care whether he is the man of God or the man of gold", her non-Christian husband reacted. "How many times has he asked you to give him money to pray for you to conceive? He keeps referring to a curse placed on you by your auntie when you were young". "He is right, and he assures me that God has revealed that to him and I believe him", Mubanga replied. "I am fed up of this nonsense. Is that the reason why you refuse to consult the doctors", her husband cried out.

This conflict escalated to a point where this couple almost divorced. Thankfully, we were able to counsel and pray with them. After a few medical tests and medication by the gynecologist, Mubanga became a happy mother of a bouncy baby girl. She has now become very suspicious of those parading themselves as men of God. While Mubanga still believes in the power of God to perform miracles she is very suspicious of many of the modern prophets.

The above scenario or a similar one is not unusual at all in many homes or families. The emergence of self-proclaimed prophets and men and women of God has become almost fashionable. Mubanga had so internalized spiritual abuse that she could not recognize it. Spiritual abuse takes many forms, as we shall discuss. There are a lot of issues that are wrong in the Church that we do not talk about. We have allowed these unspoken issues to sit alongside us like regular members of the congregation, and we refuse to address them. Church leaders should be the last people to perpetrate abuse. Even the thought of abuse is disconcerting and repulsive, but leaders sometimes do God's work in destructive ways.

A former member of Mubanga's church recalls, "There were times when I suspected that we needed to confront these issues, but I never got to verbalizing it. I acted like all was normal and ran away from reality. In retrospect I could see why a few abandoned the church altogether". It is no wonder that those who leave because of negative past experiences in churches or with church people constitute one of the largest segments in the "unchurched" demographic in my country. The challenge is not that we have not reached the "unchurched" with our evangelistic efforts; the challenge is that we have and have hurt them in the process. There is need for the Church and the ministries to start talking about and confronting

spiritual abuse. Spiritual abuse is like other types of abuse, except that it is committed under the banner of spirituality. It is not always obvious, although sometimes it could be clear and can range from never questioning the leader to habits of shaming and intimidating followers if they do not fulfill the leader's expectations. It includes 'badmouthing' members who have left the church or organization.

What is Spiritual Abuse?

Emotional abuse affects one emotionally, physical abuse inflicts pain and bodily injury on its victim; spiritual abuse affects a person spiritually. Spiritual abuse is often the result of a church or ministry leader, or a system, that controls, manipulates or dominates the members. Often leaders instill fear in their followers and control their minds and theological persuasion. Recently, in one local church bulletin I came across what I thought were three good descriptions of spiritual abuse:

> "***Spiritual abuse*** occurs when someone in a position of spiritual authority, the purpose of which is to 'come underneath' and serve, build, equip and make God's people more free, misuses that authority, placing themselves over God's people to control, coerce or manipulate them for seemingly Godly purposes which are really their own."[6] – Jeff VanVonderen.

> "***Spiritual abuse*** is the misuse of a position of power, leadership, or influence to further the selfish interests of someone other than the individual who needs help. Sometimes abuse arises out of a doctrinal position. At other times it occurs because of legitimate personal needs of a leader that are being met by illegitimate means. Spiritually abusive religious systems are sometimes described as legalistic, mind controlling, religiously addictive, and authoritarian."[7] – David Henke, Watchman Fellowship.

> "***Spiritual abuse*** occurs when a leader, church, or a belief system, whether well intentioned or not, dominates, manipulates, or castigates individuals through fear tactics, mind control, or some other psychological or emotional abuse."[8] – Spiritual Research Network.

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6 Cited from: https://libertyforcaptives.com/definitions/ [last accessed 05.08.2025].

7 Cf. "The Wartburg Watch 2024". Source: https://thewartburgwatch.com/2011/03/11/my-experience-with-church-discipline-at-covenant-fellowship-debra-baker/ [last accessed 05.08.2025].

8 "The Spokesman-Review: Faith and Values: January is Spiritual Abuse Awareness". Source: https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2023/jan/16/faith-and-values-january-is-spiritual-abuse-awaren/ [last accessed 05.08.2025].

Spiritual abuse is evident in cults, mainstream churches and many Christian organizations. One cannot help but see it from televangelists and Christian leaders both in the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches. Sadly, the media is filled with such stories. Someone once said, "Spiritual abuse is bad because it hurts people. It's worse because it hurts people and tells them they deserve it. It's worst because it hurts people and teaches them that God does too". From my experience and judging from the media reports I would state that Spiritual Abuse is one of the most pressing moral, theological, and social issues facing the Body of Christ today.

As I reflect on Mubanga's experience and think about folk who walked out of church, it was not only because these people *were emotionally and psychologically devastated but the spiritual abuse turned them away from faith in the God who could be their source of consolation and encouragement*. For those few years that Mubanga's church ignored addressing the realities of Spiritual Abuse its message and testimony were discredited. Providentially, the Lord salvaged the situation by relocating the abusive leader.

How Does Spiritual Abuse Occur?

To simplify the description of spiritual abuse and see how it occurs in practice, we could say it is to use someone or a thing to bad effect or for a bad purpose, especially regularly or repeatedly. As we have seen spiritual abuse (which is closely associated with spiritual manipulation) occurs when a spiritual leader, seeks to control individuals and ensure obedience. Often the abusive leader claims that they are God's sole channel of communication and that they alone can rightly interpret God's Word. They might also claim that God speaks through them alone and therefore there can be no further discussion on what the leader says. It is not unusual for abusive leaders to *push giving more money*, promising that God will bless those that give and punish those who do not. Of course, there is nothing wrong with a church asking for money. God desires His children to use their resources to fund the spreading of the gospel and to support its ministers. Abusiveness occurs when people are coerced, berated or threatened at offering time. This is tantamount to spiritual extortion and goes against the teaching of the scriptures on giving. We read of many a leader who founded a ministry to be a vehicle for his great gain, lying and the manipulation of donors, i.e. to enrich themselves. Such leaders demand blind servitude of their followers, but live prestigious, privileged lives. Their lifestyles are far removed from their followers, and they justify their material extravagance as God's favor and approval on their ministry. They chase after wealth at any cost, and usually at the expense of

the very people they shepherd. This is serious deception, and leadership by deception is not leadership. It's fraud!

I know of a church where members are classified according to the amount they give to the leaders. Those who give in tens of thousands have a Diamond membership card and enjoy certain privileges in the church. These are followed by Gold members, who give in thousands and then the Bronze category for those contributing in hundreds. Access to privileges is commensurate with one's category. For example, the Diamond members have the privilege of dining in expensive restaurants with the church leader, but at the expense of the member.

In Africa spiritual abuse has led to laziness and consequently to slow-growing or stagnant economies. Spiritual faithful people are taught to simply name and claim whatever they desire, and they will get it as long as they are 'beefing-up' the pockets of their leaders. Students are encouraged to buy 'anointed pens' from the 'Man of God' that will enable them to pass their exams even if they do not study. It is not unusual to hear of cases where women are sexually abused by the so called 'Man of God'. I remember dealing with a situation where a childless couple was told by the 'prophet' to have the wife get the 'anointed seed' of the prophet before the woman would conceive. The rot and rubbish that goes on in our contemporary Christian culture in Africa is very nauseating.

In the African culture leaders, be they political, business, or traditional, use fear, manipulation and ignorance to control their subjects. Consequently, it is common to witness many people in the communities of faith being led into submission against their will. The lack of Scripture knowledge on the part of many Christians has left them gullible and open to deception. For many people the Scriptures are no longer the final authority in all matters of Christian doctrine and conduct – the so-called man or woman of God is.

Hierarchical Theology has taken center stage in Africa and in many parts of the world. Adherents of Hierarchical theology subscribe to the belief that there is a hierarchy of ranks from the top to the bottom in leadership. Usually, this teaching results in the view that control starts with the most senior leaders. It is believed that it is through this hierarchy that Christ ministers and blesses the Church. Often this hierarchy is understood in terms of titles. In some denominations the highest rank could be the Chief Apostle or Apostle. Below this rank would be the office of the bishop, and then the Prophet and the Pastor would be next in rank respectively. Gone are the days when church or ministry leaders were referred to as Pastor or Minister of the Gospel. Not many church leaders choose to be called by these last titles as they have become the lowest status for the Minister of

the Gospel. A spiritual and competent leader requires no title to give him the respect of the followers. A leader who makes too much of their title generally has little else to commend them.

With the title comes authority and power. The higher the title the more the power one wields. Such leaders love to be addressed by their self-generated ecclesiastical titles. Others insist on being addressed by their academic and professional achievements such as, "Reverend Doctor ...". I have nothing against titles, but I have a problem when leaders insist on being addressed by these titles and use them to take advantage of others. It is the kind of power that makes one accountable only to themselves and no others. With the title comes entitlement. They demand that they be respected and offered gifts and money by their followers because, after all, they serve God on behalf of their followers. They claim that not to succumb to their demands is to be disobedient to God. Ironically, I find that people have an enormous appetite for abuse. Often, it looks as if the fear and shame that motivate their abusive leaders are the same feelings that motivate their victims to accept the abuse. Other church members would not have church any other way! It seems to me that in some of our churches spiritual abuse has become so normalized that it is viewed as the path to spiritual growth. How can we crave for what hurts us and believe it is best for us?

Abusive leaders have a distorted view of respect. They demand respect without having earned it by good, honest living. They forget the simple axiom that respect is earned, not granted. They demand allegiance as proof of a follower's allegiance to Christ, and if a member deviates, he is guilty of deviating from Jesus. Unfortunately, the gullible followers perform acts of service in order to make themselves favorable to these abusive leaders. Such leaders often allocate to the 'heavy givers' longer times for visitation and prayer than they do for the rest of the church.

Hierarchical Theology is synonymous with hyper-spirituality. It is assumed that the higher the rank one has the more spiritual one is. This is not always true. In churches where this belief is held chances for abuse abound. Leaders who lack in true spirituality will over-compensate for their lack of authentic spirituality by pretending to be hearing from God. This pretense will graduate into pride, and this pride becomes an entry point for wielding many forms of abuse. Eventually, the 'super-spiritual' leader will invent excuses for his unbecoming behavior by saying that "God told him" to do unreasonable or unbiblical things. It is no wonder that we have witnessed some congregants eating grass at the command of such leaders. Some leaders have made their congregants steppingstones when preaching. In other words, they literally walk on the bodies of their congregants lying on the floor as they preach. When a leader claims to be

told by God to do things that are inconsistent with the Scriptures and Christian conduct – run away from that leader as fast as you can and as far as you can get.

It is not uncommon these days for leaders to have a bunch of bodyguards wherever they go. While in the pulpits these leaders are surrounded by security men and women. Some even have cup-bearers! They demand that they be treated like royalty and accorded the respect of a high-ranking political leader since they are ministers of the Gospel, a higher calling than that of a political figure. Their members even have to give one-month's notice before they can have access to them. The doors to the office of the real leader are always open to all who wish to enter, and his office is free from unnecessary formality or ostentation. There are all kind of abominable practices going on in some churches that exploit their members. Resist spiritual abuse and get your friends out before someone gets hurt. I like the quote below:

> "Your body is a temple, not a daily dumping ground for another person's pain, anger, betrayal, judgment, hypocrisy, denial, games, jealousy or blame. When you are being psychologically, spiritually or emotionally abused by a person, and they don't care how it hurts you, then it is time to leave what is polluting your relationship with God."[9] – Shannon L. Alder

Misuse of Scripture is yet another form that spiritual abuse takes. These leaders' faulty hermeneutics only work to bolster their own egos and authority and keep their members under their thumbs. An example of this is the mis-use of passages of Scripture such as Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you". These passages have been used to demand blind loyalty and unthinking obedience. Another scripture commonly used to abuse is Psalm 105:15 "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm." This scripture is often taken to mean that the leaders should not be corrected, criticized or rebuked when they are in error or sin. Sometimes they will quote a scripture that forbids bringing accusations against an elder. There is so much manipulation that goes on.

Then there are those leaders who abuse the Scriptures as if they themselves, are the authority, while being ignorant even of their own lack of spirituality, their needs and desires. Consequently, they are the kind who

[9] Cf. https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1266393-your-body-is-a-temple-not-a-daily-dumping-ground [last accessed 05.08.2025].

desire to have their perceived needs met by abusing their authority. Interesting enough, when this happens those members who are dependent on their (leader's) authority feel their needs are met too. There is mutual deception here. Some followers, especially those who stand to benefit from the leader, desire to remain loyal to the leader and not to Christ. Unfortunately, many hurting members struggle to earn the favor and approval of a leader, all the while thinking they are earning the favor of God. No amount of work for a spiritually-abusive leader will give one more acceptance than they already have – if you are in Christ, you already have God's favor! It must be remembered that the loyalty is due to Christ, the Head of the church, not to a particular organization, church, or leader. (Eph 1:22).

Abusers will often interpret, or worse still, misinterpret, the Scriptures for the congregation; not allowing sound reasoning or questions. The abuser will burden the people with his teaching to the extent that he destroys freedom and grace as people are required to follow his teachings religiously. He imposes his own control using fear and shame and, in the process, distorts the image of God projecting Him as a hard taskmaster. This type of leader calls the shots about church attendance, how much you should give, and how you should relate to him. It is even considered as rebellion when someone questions decisions that are made or statements from the pulpit. While it is true that there are those who constantly question the leadership in any church or organization and that often this comes from an individual's critical attitude, nevertheless, not all questioning is ill intended. Leaders must learn to deal with such questioning in a compassionate, positive manner. Unfortunately, abusive leaders consider any and all questions as threats to their "God-ordained" authority. Followers who do dare to question their leaders or who do not follow their instructions are often confronted with severe consequences.

The abusers twist the scriptures to justify their bad behavior. They hide who they really are in their teachings. They bend the truth. They do not show the truth about how they feel, what matters most to them, what their real priorities are. They are not honest about their spirituality and the personal challenges they face. Leaders should be honest and real and not project a reality they do not enjoy, putting on happy faces and 'acting' instead of telling the truth. It is intriguing that followers will often encourage this kind of spiritual abuse because they derive more comfort in putting the leader on a pedestal, even though a false one, than graciously accepting him with all his weaknesses. In some organizations and churches other leaders are angered and

embarrassed when a leader confesses his weaknesses and sin. I believe that our quest to put leaders on a pedestal contributes to the sickening cycle of spiritual abuse.

In a manipulative church or organization, the leader often subtly positions himself/herself to take the *place of the Holy Spirit* in peoples' lives. This happens so easily because spiritual abuse can be difficult to detect at first if you have never encountered it before. For example, the leader may try to put undue influence on the choices that the members are making. The leader may even try to sway someone's decision in a matter to keep them under their control, or to keep them from leaving the church or organization. They are often told they cannot leave the church or organization with God's blessing unless the leader approves their decision. They are cautioned that if they fail to follow the leader's guidance, not only will God not bless them, but they will also bring a curse upon themselves or their family because they are leaving the "covering" of the church or organization.

Leaders who are not being led by the Holy Spirit consequently take the place of the Holy Spirit and have an insatiable appetite for control. They buffer themselves from criticism by placing people around them whose only allegiance is to them. Anyone who brings up legitimate issues is viewed as an enemy and may be banished, told to be quiet or shamed into submission. Friends quickly become enemies if they differ legitimately with the leader. A former Bible College classmate has unfortunately slipped into this category. He was a fine charismatic leader in his church and started off well, being personable and interested in others' issues. Recently he has slipped into arrogance, protectionism and pride and has withdrawn to a small group of "yes people" isolated from the needs of others. These 'yes people' feel like blessed insiders. Others are on the outside, though they often long to be in that inner circle. Should someone on the inner circle dare to speak up about abuses, lapses in character, illegal acts, or manipulation such insider immediately becomes an outsider. Fear of losing their special status often impedes "yes people" from speaking up. I can see how my friend's church harbors a cult of personality which means that if he leaves it is likely the church will collapse, because it is entirely dependent on one person to hold it together. I shudder to think of how my friend has cultivated a dependence on one leader, himself, for spiritual information. He is the only person who teaches in his church. When he is away his wife mounts the pulpit.

Creating a *culture of fear and shame* as a means of controlling people in the church or organization is yet another common means of abuse. Members may be threatened with all kinds of calamities if they disobey

instructions from the leader or are not supportive of the course of action proposed by him. Often, such leaders cannot admit failure but search out failure in others and use that knowledge to hold them in fear and captivity. They will confront sin in others, particularly those who bring up legitimate biblical issues. They even have those in their circle of influence take on this task of silencing critics. This type of action is certainly not from God. Nowhere do we read in the Bible where Jesus motivated people out of fear. It can be said that fear is a form of manipulation, which is sin. People must be motivated through love to serve the body of Christ and reach the lost. It is no wonder the Apostle of love writes, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1Jn 4:18). Abusive leaders keep good people in fear to get them to build the leaders' religious kingdoms while telling them that they are building the kingdom of God. Such leaders are focused on their own needs being met while the needs of the people are ignored. This resonates with the behavior of the religious leaders of Christ's time. They imposed on the people false religious burdens, not for the good of the people but for the sake of their own 'power and prosperity'. It was no wonder Christ was very critical of them:

> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel" (Mt 23:23-24).

Similarly, today, many followers find themselves bearing a heavy load of religious baggage in an abusive system controlled by the manipulative spiritual leader. There are literally thousands of church members who are on a quest to earn the favor and approval of modern-day Pharisees.

Every church or organization should ensure that there are systems of accountability in place for everyone in leadership positions. To allow a leader to have unquestioned authority over decisions and policies is but courting trouble. Not only should there be accountability structures and systems but there should also be an intentionality and willingness on the part of the leaders to listen to the members. I have noticed that many members do not feel that they have the freedom to express their opinions to the leaders. The leaders must allow these conversations to take place without jumping to the defensive. It is also very important that leaders should teach and preach more about the Gospel, spiritual abuse and the characteristics of a godly leader.

Spiritual Abuse in the Bible

The Bible has several examples of spiritual abuse though that terminology has not been used until lately. This abuse was nauseating to God then and has the same effect today. In the scripture it is referred to as *'bondage to men and the traditions of men'.* In Jeremiah 5:30-31 scripture says, "A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?" Here God brings an indictment against the religious leaders of the day. The leaders had made people believe that their power was divine, yet they were simply wielding their self-imposed influence for personal gain. Again, Jeremiah records for us, "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain, prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace', they say, when there is no peace". (Jer 6:13-14). This is yet another sad account of self-absorbed prophets and priests who were preoccupied with having their own needs met at the expense of the people. The common denominator of abusive leaders is that the real needs of the people are lost in the never-ending quest by the leaders for personal gratification and happiness. The story of Mubanga clearly illustrates this.

The book of Ezekiel contains an exhortation in which the Lord holds the leaders of Israel responsible for abusing the people of God.

> "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered, they became food for all the wild animals'" (Ezk 34:2-6).

Matthew 9:36 reads, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." This did not mean that the people lacked a shepherd. They had lots of Pharisees. The point is that the people had no one to lead them to spiritual green pastures and peaceful rest. It was just that the religious system and leadership of that time were like a force pressing upon the people resulting in them feeling weary, distressed and downcast. This force promised tranquility if one adhered to the prescribed rules and regulations as

advanced by the Pharisees. It was a force that enslaved the people and abused them. Consequently, it can be said today that the people in abusive churches are like sheep without a shepherd. This contrasts vividly with how Jesus cared deeply about His people and how they were treated. He still does the same. A study of the scriptures will show that the strongest and most emotional and responses Jesus displayed came against the spiritual abusers of His time.

Another biblical example of abusive leadership is the one recorded for us in 3 John:

> "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church" (3Jn 9-10).

Diotrephes's problem was that of spiritual authoritarianism and elitism and John calls it 'evil' (v. 11). Leaders must be on the lookout for the dangerous trap of spiritual elitism that can produce an "us-and-them", or a "fortress" mentality. This is a mentality where the leader is untouchable and practically inaccessible as if he lives in a fortress. This is a sure sign of spiritual abuse. Leaders with an elitist attitude think that the whole world revolves around their ministry. Such a leader will be ego-centric: thinking they have the best ministry because they possess every symbol of the successful leader – big house, latest cars, big bank account, best dressed etc. An elitist leader will even discourage members from visiting other churches or receiving counsel from anyone who does not attend their church. If anyone goes against their rule, he or she is viewed as rebellious and will be threatened. Elitist leaders could, but do not, respect and encourage the other churches and ministries in their communities by recognizing that they are different expressions of the body of Christ. Elitist leadership promotes the idea that it has doctrinal or spiritual superiority. Such leaders manage to convince their followers that they are the 'elect few' and bash other churches. Such congregations become fertile breeding ground for strange teachings.

Any healthy church or movement will respect and celebrate the other expressions of Evangelical spirituality. Humble and spiritual leaders recognize that the small church is as significant as the large church, the Anglican as vital as the Charismatics, and every believer regardless of their ethnic, cultural, economic or denominational background is welcome to

the Lord's Table. Co-operation and networking across the Body of Christ for the sake of the Gospel and Christian sanctification is non-negotiable.

Diotrephes was nowhere near servant-hearted, tender and compassionate. He seemed to have been an immature and untested leader who didn't know how to serve and hence ended up wounding people with his harsh demands, threats and dominating attitudes. Abusive and authoritarian leaders, like Diotrephes, do not submit their lives to anyone; they are loose cannons, and they are unfit for leadership.

Followers must always be wary of a *secretive atmosphere because* secrecy is always a hallmark of a spiritually abusive church or organization. In them you discover that leaders are not open about their own lives, they do not allow members to question anything, and the financial records of the church are closed to them. Concerning this aspect Jonestown survivor Deborah Layton wrote:

> "When our own thoughts are forbidden, when our questions are not allowed and our doubts are punished, when contacts and friendships outside of the organization are censored, we are being abused for an end that never justifies its means. When our heart aches knowing we have made friendships and secret attachments that will be forever forbidden if we leave, we are in danger. When we consider staying in a group because we cannot bear the loss, disappointment and sorrow our leaving will cause for ourselves and those we have come to love, we are in a cult."[10]

Like cults, abusive churches intentionally insulate members from any information critical of the church. Early on followers of a cult are pressured to be skeptical of any negative report about the group and to believe that the biased media only tells lies about them. The group is made to believe that these "lies" are but simple persecution – which persecution authenticates the truth they hold. Abusive churches similarly tend to isolate people from their families. They create fear in them and make it difficult for members to leave and as such they stay-put keeping their misgivings to themselves.

Another aspect of secrecy perpetuated by abusive leaders is that they ensure that the followers surrender to a system of control. For example, the leader gives only limited information to each individual, while carefully monitoring each relationship. Consequently, each follower is only able to relate to other followers based on the information they receive from the leader. In this way the leader maintains the control they believe is necessary over any follower who they perceive as a 'threat'. The 'threat'

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[10] Deborah Layton, *Seductive Poison* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), 299.

may be asked to leave and in such a case the leader would retain the support of the other followers. The secret of control or manipulation remains with the leader.

Recovering from Abuse

It is normal when someone joins a Christian organization or a church that he or she has their guard down because they consider themselves to be among those most interested in their welfare. They view this environment as a refuge since they are among those who are there to help and not hurt. It is for this reason that individuals have an increased vulnerability to hurt. The damage done by spiritual abuse is very deep, much deeper than most would ever imagine or think unless they have experienced it for themselves. When a person acts, believing that what they were told was from God, but it turns out to be false, they experience disappointment and disillusionment not only in and with the person who led them in the counsel, but in and toward God Himself. This is what makes spiritual abuse so serious in God's eyes and why it takes time for people to recover from it. A well-known counselor of spiritually abused victims observes that the symptoms exhibited by them are the same as those exhibited by a victim of incest. This is because in both cases a trusted caregiver has violated the trust placed in them.

It is said that an overwhelming majority of Christians have experienced and are experiencing some variation of spiritual abuse. Some may not want to admit it as they may feel that to do so is to make themselves victims by admitting that they are in an abusive situation. For others the situation may look so normal that they feel that it does not fall into the abusive category at all. A person may not realize that they are in an abusive situation until they are removed from it. What once seemed normal was actually harming them. Unfortunately, church leaders do not like to admit when they have done wrong, which results in church members burying their hurt. In most cases this pain becomes a stumbling block between God and His people and consequently some people walk away from their faith because the hurt has become too much to bear.

We have noticed from Mubanga's experience that spiritual abuse is easily internalized, and one may not even be aware that it is going on. Then there are others who may be aware that they are victims but the 'benefits' or 'privileges' that the system offers them urge them to stay on. The perpetrators also may be aware of the abuse but the advantages it offers them are too much to give up. It really takes the grace of God to be set free from abuse either as a perpetrator or a victim. I have counseled

many individuals who have gone through bad church experiences which have left them feeling like failures. They sometimes blamed themselves and asked for God's forgiveness. Sometimes they have felt distant from the church and sometimes from God too. It is not easy to make such individuals appreciate that often the fault has not been theirs but that of Christian leaders who have abused them spiritually.

Recognizing the distorted, damaging experiences on our spiritual journeys is the first step toward true recovery from abuse. Recovery is often a gradual process. For an abuser, recognizing their own spiritual abuse of others can be both painful and helpful. We may sometimes need to solicit the assistance of a professional counselor to embark on the healing journey. An abused person needs someone who understands that the injury is real and deep. It does not help to simply tell the person to pray and move on. Emotions must be permitted to be expressed. An abused person experiences anger, grief, hurt, and loss and so needs time to reconcile their emotions with reality. I believe that recovery begins with the truth of John 8:32, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." This is about knowing the truth of what transpired and an appreciation of the Truth of the Scriptures. I have found it helpful to find out from the victim about how the spiritual abuse impacted them. Additionally, find out what made the victim vulnerable and how trust was cultivated and then violated.

It is not unusual for victims to go through a stage of self-doubt on their way to recovery. There are others who may even wonder if God is judging them because of something wrong in themselves or something wrong they did in the past. However, it must be remembered that the wrong and hurt came about when they were led to believe a lie. It is usually helpful for someone who has gone through a similar experience to talk to them, so they begin to understand that they are not alone. The victim can find healing in sharing their own experience, especially in the context of a support group. However, it is beyond the scope of this short book to go into details as to how best a spiritually abused person can be assisted to recover. However, below are seven steps one may take to recover from spiritual abuse as outlined by Diederich[11]:

1. *Remove yourself from the abuse.* This seems so obvious, but surprisingly people remain in abusive environments for a variety of reasons.

[11] F. Remy Diederich, "How to recover from spiritual abuse". Source: http://www.readingremy.com/how-to-recover-from-spiritual-abuse/ [last accessed 04.06.2018].

- Mostly they doubt themselves. Deep down they think this is their fault. If they were only a better person/Christian they'd see things clearly and see how they are wrong, just like everyone is telling them. Their "abuser" is right. They are just overreacting. So, false guilt plays a big role in keeping someone from leaving.
- People will also doubt their ability to make it without the influence of their abuser. The abuser played such a big role in their life. Yes, they crossed boundaries, but maybe they needed to do that to keep them on the straight and narrow. In other words, they are quick to minimize and deny the abuse.
- Plus there is the peer pressure. If your friends and family all say there's no problem, who are you to disagree? You don't want to be the only one leaving. Isn't it better to keep quiet and go along ... not make waves? But this is why you need to get out. You need to clear your head from this kind of thinking. Just because others don't see the abuse, doesn't mean it's not there.

Think of it as being wounded in battle. If you are wounded, you don't remain to keep fighting. Let others do that. You need to get to a safe place before it's too late.

What if the church has "repented" of the abuse? Should you stay then? Maybe. I'll talk about this more in future posts. But unless the church does a wholesale admittance and cleansing of the abuse and establishes new leadership, there will be too many vestiges of abusive behavior in place, and it will subtly eat away at you (and others).

2. *Take a break.* Part of the sickness of spiritual abuse is that it builds an unhealthy dependence on a person or church rather than a dependence on God. To help show you that you can survive with God alone, take a break from church. There was a season of five years when I didn't attend church. This is probably more than the average person needs, but God did something in my heart that shaped me and prepared me for future ministry (ironically).

3. *Get perspective.* If you've been abused then most likely your thinking has been distorted. You've bought into some lies that need correcting. You need to put some distance in between yourself and your church for a period of time (if not indefinitely) in order to clear your mind and get back on track. A few ways to do that are:

- Talk to friends from other churches that are known for being healthy and grace based.

- Talk to a pastor from a healthy church.
- Read about spiritual abuse to understand how it works.
- Read about grace.

4. *Get counseling*. Abuse does a number on your soul. It's a transgression that's hard to quantify but is nevertheless very real. You need to sort it out with someone who can see the abuse clearly. Plus, it's important that you understand what it might be about you that made you susceptible to the toxic thinking in the first place. I've found that people who struggle with insecurity and shame are especially vulnerable to the legalism promoted by spiritual abuse. They are naturally driven to want to please others to feel good about themselves. Abusers provide that.

5. *Develop a strong devotional life***.** Spiritual abuse sets up a person, or church, as an intermediary between you and God. All the rules and requirements may have made you think you were on the inner circle with God, but it actually pushed you farther away. So work on developing your relationship with God through prayer, reflection, and meditating on scripture. Spiritual abuse sets up a person, or church, as an intermediary between you and God. All the rules and requirements may have made you think you were on the inner circle with God, but it actually pushed you farther away.

6. *Establish healthy boundaries*. Some people have trouble saying "no". They feel obligated to go along with friends, family members, and people in authority. Hopefully you will look at these issues in counseling. But it's very important to not just protect yourself from a toxic church, you might have to protect yourself from unhealthy people in your life too. Just like an alcoholic has to be careful not to let people back into their lives that could cause them to relapse, so does the person who has been spiritually abused.

People will come at you trying to minimize or deny what's happened to you. They'll say things like: "You are overreacting. It wasn't that bad." "You are just resisting what God wants in your life. You are being rebellious." "They can't be abusive. They are good people. They really helped me." "The devil is using you to divide this church."

Boundaries will help protect you from these attacks.

7. *Re-engage with a healthy church*. Most churches talk about grace. But many churches talk about it better than they practice it. Visit a number of churches. Sit in the back and just listen and observe. Now that you've gained some perspective, look to see if grace is taught as well as lived out.

Remember, abuse and legalism can be subtle. You don't want to engage in a church that puts you on the hook to please THEM and not God.

Should you return to your old church? That would be ideal. If they have done their work to eliminate and repent of all abusive behavior, and you have found healing, then the best-case scenario would be for you to be re-united with your church family. But that's a big "if". So be careful with that. Don't be coerced to go back unless you feel good about it: you feel strong enough and you sense it would be a good thing for you.

You will undoubtedly be tempted to leave church forever. I understand that. I did that for many years. But I came to realize that God has chosen to move in the world through his church in spite of our brokenness. So, I hope you will find your way back to church and become a fully functioning part of the body of Christ.

Conclusion

As responsible citizens of this planet we have a moral obligation to hold those in leadership accountable. No leader is beyond scrutiny and critique. To fail to critique leadership is to fail ourselves, and posterity will judge us harshly. We should not allow hero worship, nor cultism, nor hypocritical allegiance and obedience to bad leaders to dominate us. We must demand our birthright and liberty to be free from spiritual dominance and abuse by any leader. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Freedom to worship, enjoy Christ and share the gospel without a shadow of slavery from those in leadership hanging over us.

Questions for Reflection

- Spiritual abuse is often sneaky **and tends to** hide itself in the fact that it is not commonly discussed and thus is often overlooked. What are the symptoms that indicate the presence of spiritual abuse?
- What do you think are some of the accountability structures and regulations that would need to be put in place to avoid abuse?
- Read 3 John. How did Diotrephes exercise spiritual abuse?

Memory Verse

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit, you will recognize them" (Mt 7:15-16).

Chapter 4: Effective Leadership

Leaders don't fail because of who they are or what they do. It's often because of one inaction.

Leadership Meltdown

On January 20th, 2017, Donald Trump took office as the 45th President of the United States of America much to the surprise of the world. In fact, the BBC stated:

> "Donald Trump has defied all expectations from the very start of his presidential campaign more than a year ago. Very few people thought he would actually run, then he did. They thought he wouldn't climb in the polls, then he did. They said he wouldn't win any primaries, then he did. They said he wouldn't win the Republican nomination, then he did. Finally, they said there was no way he could compete for, let alone win, a general election. Now he's President-elect Trump."[12]

Our world is experiencing serious crises, including social, political, cultural and economic ones. Leadership has not been spared, and we are experiencing a leadership meltdown. The main reason for this is neglect by those in authority of the art or architecture of leadership. This has led to a leadership vacuum. While I am not an expert on American politics it is clear that President Trump took advantage of this vacuum. He read the times well and presented the people with what no one else would dare state publicly. It is common knowledge that in spite of claimed economic growth the American economy had changed structurally in a radical way – and for the worse, at least for many who had worked in the 'heavy industries, which had been forced to close. **Americans felt cheated of leadership. Whatever your political persuasion about the 2016 American elections, one thing is clear; there was dissatisfaction with President Obama's leadership – rightly or wrongly.**

We have all witnessed the public downfall of leaders from almost every sector of endeavor. It has occurred in organizations, business, politics, church, and sports. We have observed how swiftly they have migrated from the top to the bottom. It is easy to think that such catastrophic failure

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[12] Anthony Zurcher, "US Election2016: Five reasons Donald Trump won". Source: http://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-37918303 [last accessed 19.04.2018].

could never happen to you. You may think "I've worked hard to achieve my well-deserved position of leadership, and I won't give it up for anything". However, we should remember that the distance between beloved leader and despised failure is shorter than we think or imagine.

This chapter seeks to address various gaps in leadership that lead to failure or could cause leadership to dysfunction. While it is recognized that the leader and his team occupy the formal leadership positions in any organization, such titular leadership responsibility does not always translate into leadership action. We have all observed occasions when leaders were unwilling or unable to lead. When this happens, the consequences can be devastating and catastrophic. This occurs especially when an organization is going through some changes, or when the constituency they serve is evolving. Discussed below are some areas that will assist leaders in ensuring that they keep on the cutting-edge of leadership and build the organization.

Provide a Clear and Shared Vision

Mwape[13], a close friend, rang me to say that the International Director of a large Christian para-church organization where he served as country director had given him a choice, to either take a lower position or resign his job. Mwape explained that after two appraisals he had not met the minimum standard to continue serving in that portfolio. Mwape had lost a few colleagues from middle management, and after some discussions with him it was clear to me that he, though talented, had failed to provide them with a clear and shared vision.

My friend's failure to provide such a clear shared vision had, over time, bred some problems, including personal and organizational ones. A clear vision is what motivates and marshals the team to first develop themselves and also grow the organization. The vision should be inclusive and embraced by all at various levels in the organization so that they are willing to put it into action.

A good leader understands the significance of establishing a clear and shared vision. It is what motivates and rallies the work force. A clear vision is the compass-needle arrow of the organization. A shared vision is inclusive in its development and is not simply driven from the top down but includes members of the organization at various levels in its formulation. By the very nature of that kind of development, the vision has 'buy-in' from the team who are expected to put it into action. Without a clear and

[13] Not his real name.

shared vision, the chances of losing some people are high; especially middle management, as Mwape experienced. The reason is simple: when there is no vision, talented leaders have little willingness to take risks. They will have nothing to aim for and hate to just keep the status quo. There is also another clear and present danger that leaders sometimes face – the temptation to shift or adjust the vision consciously or unconsciously. This happens in a variety of ways. It is, therefore, of paramount importance to guard against this. It is not unusual for leaders to simply lose sight of what is critical. The sharp focus that catapulted them to the top wanes away and they become distracted by the trappings of leadership, such as wealth and fame. When a leader loses sight of the dream that compelled him or her to accept the responsibility of leadership, they can find themselves working for causes that mean little to them. Leaders must adhere to what they love and what motivated them initially if they are to maintain the fulfillment of leadership. I have personally found it helpful to ask myself three simple questions in order not to lose my passion and vision: What were my reasons for assuming leadership? Have these reasons altered? Do I still have a desire to lead?

In order to provide a clear and shared vision good leaders are usually distinguished by their ability to "think outside the box" or "think big" without compromising the vision. They should not allow anything or anybody to shift their focus or they will suddenly start thinking small. When this happens, they are prone to micromanage, as they get caught up in details better left to others. When a leader loses the vision, he becomes consumed with trivial and unimportant issues.

Leading by Being

It is an open secret that there are numberless leaders in our communities who have failed to lead by example. They mount political, religious and organizational podiums or pulpits and give outstanding orations on their leadership and commitment to serve, and yet their lives clearly stand in sharp contrast with what they espouse in public. It is a fact that nothing develops or destroys trust in leadership quicker than the observable behaviors of leaders. The leader should role-model the organization's values and expected behaviors in order to foster an environment of consistency. People do what they see being done by their leader – it is as simple as that. Leaders must be conscious of the fact that they are an open book and that others are taking their cues from the behaviour they observe. The failure to set the right example is one of the reasons for the failure of the very gifted leader. This is because a leader is the role model

the organization will pattern itself after. A leader should be a man or woman of the highest integrity. They must have the courage to do what is right because it is right. Integrity is maintaining personal conduct that is without reproach. It is walking the talk.

A good and clear vision entails that a leader focuses more on "becoming" than on "doing" because it is the character of his leadership, rather than his accomplishing the vision, that attracts followers to him and helps them engage with the vision. The commendable work of leadership is undoubtedly a result of who the leader is. Consequently, what the leader does then flows naturally from their inner vision and character. A leader leads out of who they are. The temptation is for a leader to become too action oriented and, in the process, loses touch with the more important development of self.

During a seminar that I was conducting with key leaders, one of the participants, a very successful businessman, pointed out his struggle when it came to integrity in the business world. He said, "In the business world, integrity really does not matter. Decisions are rarely an issue of right and wrong. They are an issue of what is allowable under the law and the laws are not always consistent with business ethics. Unfortunately, I have made the same observation among some Christian leaders". We don't have to look very far to see the validity of this comment. How many Christian organizations and churches are riddled with scandals in our own context? We must always remember that in the court of public opinion the organizations led by leaders who exhibit a lack of integrity are tainted with the same level of distrust and disgust as the person who leads them.

Integrity and honesty should be at the top of the virtues for any leader. A few years ago, I had the unfortunate experience of having to counsel a leader of a particular organization concerning moral failure. This gifted and charismatic leader was found sending pornographic pictures of himself to women other than his wife. This leader not only lost the confidence of his constituency, he lost his job too. At the time of our counseling sessions, he was facing the very real possibility of losing his wife and family.

On the other hand, it is important that leaders be authentic. Authenticity is one of the prerequisites for leadership. It is okay for a leader to be himself or herself. Organizations like to be led by human beings with good qualities as well as weaknesses. Leaders are not angels and people will be more willing to respect a leader who has a realistic self-awareness than one who pretends to be a saint. Nothing makes a leader lose respect faster that when people see through them and they fail to acknowledge their own short-comings. If you 'pretend' to be who you are not; people will 'pretend' to respect you. It is as simple as that.

High Premium on Relationships

There is a proverb in one of the Zambian tribes that says that a thoughtful monkey shares its food and allows other monkeys to swing on its branches. I am not sure just how relational monkeys are. Human beings are created with a need for gregariousness and relationships. Good relationships do not just happen. A good leader will ensure the creation of an environment that enables and encourages everyone to relate and work to the best of their abilities. This process starts with building relationships, and this is a primary function of those serving in a leadership capacity. In any given community life revolves around relationships. Consequently, success in an organization is inextricably tied to the personal connections that are built and maintained.

Followers or team members are looking for leaders who put a high premium on relationships. When this occurs, the followers will trust the leaders with their lives because they allow them to reach their fullest human potential. Perhaps, as you read this you are reflecting on your past experience and observation and can recall leaders who have failed utterly and remarkably at giving leadership, because they were not relational. As such they have not been able to set the context for recognizing, developing, and leveraging everyday greatness that exists within any organization or church.

I have always admired Chilufya, one of the Directors in a Christian organization. He is the kind of man who keeps a record of his team members' birthdays as well as those of their spouses and children and sends a card on birthdays. It was not unusual for Chilufya to invite others for meals at his place. He visited his team members in their homes when he had one policy: "we never talk about work in our homes – we socialize." Chilufya earned the respect of his peers and their spouses. He viewed people as people and not objects that were engaged to produce results for the organization. While is it important that people should deliver, it is also key that people should be treated with respect and feel loved and cared for by their leader if they are to deliver optimum input to the organization. Leaders should be willing to go out of their way in the quest to empower others through a healthy relationship with them. However, this doesn't negate discipline where it is due.

I learnt long ago in my early years of leadership that visibility, accessibility and approachability are cardinal in developing significant relationships with my fellow workers. I intentionally had a high level of visibility and interaction with those I led. It was not unusual to meet around the table during coffee breaks and discuss work-related issues in an informal

way. I believe this sent the message that I encouraged them to make suggestions and offer opinions which in turn created a stronger sense of ownership and family.

Healthy relationships are also enhanced when a leader serves as a servant. A leader must appreciate that to lead, you must serve and to serve is to build healthy relationships. Serving others is central to promoting an environment that captures the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of your followers. A leader must remember that they are a servant first, who has made a decision to lead as a way to serve others, not to enhance her own circumstances or increase her power. Servant leadership results in building relationships that give the people who are led the confidence that their leader has faith in her people, believing that everyone has the capability for greatness and can be trusted to do great things. Leaders that place a high premium on relationships often have the approach of, "How may I serve you?"

One of the key factors in the successful establishment of healthy relationships is that leaders are committed to stay with the organization for a long period of time. The longer they stay with the organization the stronger will be the relationships. "Tour-of-duty" leaders have rarely led successful organizations, let alone built strong relationships with the team. Why would the team follow a leader who will be gone within a few years anyway? Some leaders join organizations to simply prepare for their next career move. They rarely serve the organization but have come to use the organization as a steppingstone to further their ambitions and career. This attitude kills team spirit as well as ownership.

Placing a high premium on relationships means knowing and understanding your people, engaging their hearts and minds, understanding what motives them, what is on their minds, and what they need. It requires that a leader understands and supports his peoples' targets and tasks and is engaged in helping them achieve them. A relational leader will be intentional about spending more time with their people than with other Senior Leaders and 'VIPs'. So far as a relational leader is concerned, all people are VIPs.

It has been said that relational leaders are empowerment leaders because meaningful empowerment is done within the context of good and healthy relationships. One of the organizations on whose Board of Directors I serve proved that developing empowerment in the organization dramatically decreased staff turnover within the first two years of employment. As soon as workers found out they could make a real difference for the organization they automatically assumed ownership for protecting the right to be engaged in work that gave them a sense of meaning and significance.

Effective Communication

When I talk of effective communication, I mean that the leader communicates in such a way that he connects with and inspires and supports those whom he leads. When I talk about effective communication, I refer to communication that goes beyond information-sharing to interactive exchanges between the parties involved in communication. It is the kind of communication that clarifies the trajectory of the organization, sets expectations, and reviews progress.

Effective communication requires that people have access to information. It is this information that will empower them to take decisions more quickly and move forward faster with their business. When this is absent the organization will become slow and lethargic. One of the major reasons why there is communication breakdown in organizations is undercommunicating information.

Ineffective communication may also occur when the leader lacks focus. When this happens, followers find it hard to perform effectively because such leaders remain unclear about their own purpose and often hide their confusion and uncertainty in ambiguous communication. It goes without saying that the followers cannot possibly understand a leader's intent when the leader is not sure what it is! Someone has said that clarity of purpose is the starting point for all effective communication in any organization.

Even in the case where the leader may have a clear focus, miscommunication may also occur. How does this happen? A leader may fall into what I would term the 'trap of clairvoyance'. This happens when a leader begins to believe that his committed followers will involuntarily sense their goals and know what they want without being told. Unfortunately, when misunderstandings arise, leaders tend to blame their followers for lack of effort or commitment rather than recognizing their own communication negligence. The old axiom "Say what you mean and mean what you say" is still applicable today, but it must be followed by knowing what the leader means.

Corrupt-Free Leadership

Thomas Jefferson once said, "When the people fear their government, there is tyranny; when the government fears the people, there is liberty". While there is a great amount of truth in this statement an organization must not be managed on the basis of fear. Only a corrupt leadership will

thrive on leading by instilling fear in the followers. Corruption is not only about embezzling funds, although this is the most common form of corruption. There are many organizations where funds and resources have been abused by those in leadership. While is some cases corrupt leaders have been brought to book there are many out there still in power because corruption has been institutionalized. Corruption takes many forms and shapes – for example, putting bad people in prime positions. These may be people who have neither the passion nor the qualifications to do the job. This form of corruption is crippling many organizations. In some it is not unusual to get a department full of friends or relatives without qualifications and gifting or ability. The price of nepotism is a complete failure of an organization to develop. Corruption is like terminal cancer – as a matter of fact it is worse than murder. It costs more lives than warfare. It takes land and funds designated to build a hospital and banks the proceeds in an off-shore account, condemning thousands of people and generations to die of hunger and curable diseases.

Corruption is hugely responsible for misplacement of people and competencies. I have observed with disdain that sometimes leadership is about who shouts the loudest, gives blind loyalty, or who makes the best speeches. Folk that have the best insight, and competencies, good character, a track record and the skills to best get results should be the only people considered for leadership. Leaders who are truly leaders do not prey on and play to the passions and prejudices of the people they serve, instead they instruct them in ways which foster their development and enhance the quality of their lives. The potential new leaders who could have taken their organizations into the future with vibrancy and dynamism are hidden or lost to mismanagement and corruption. And it is a sin against the organization and against humanity to have personnel available for growth of the organization but to choose not to engage them.

People who are beneficiaries of corrupt leadership are often the first ones to sing choruses of praise to corrupt leadership. These people seek to deceive others by emphasizing what the leader has accomplished. Let me illustrate. I know of a certain organization in my country where beneficiaries of corruption spoke and sang choruses of praise for its corrupt leader, when he had done nothing or little to justify it. This organization had received huge sums from donors to construct cheap housing for vulnerable people in the community. A large celebration was organized to hand-over the houses to them. Civic and political leaders were invited to witness the handing-over ceremony. Here is the catch: This leader was expected to achieve his target of at least 90% but had only managed to accomplish 30%. He claimed that all the funds had been used up. The truth is

that a large percentage of the funds were not accounted for. He had worked with his Chief Financial Officer to cook the figures. Many people were not aware of the fact that this leader's success should have been measured against the total projected outcome and not just the few strides that had been accomplished. The community was greatly deceived. It was concerning to listen to some of the beneficiaries of this project ignorantly praising this leader and expressing how much he loved the community.

Upgrade and Connect

There is an African proverb that goes: "Do not get so comfortable in someone else's house that you forget to build your own". Leadership that dwells in the space of 'contentment and satisfaction' is prone to eventually become obsolete and irrelevant. Its shelf-life will come to an end eventually and be confined to the archives. It soon becomes history. Effective and informed leaders are those who have both personal and organizational leadership development plans and so are able to engage in a relevant way with all that is going on around and in their organization. In our fast-changing world, the leadership styles, techniques, strategies and philosophies of yesterday may not be adequate to effectively solve today's challenges. Upgrade is needed at various levels. Let me start off by addressing issues of technology.

The last twenty-five years has registered a remarkable advance in *technology; more than at* any other period in human history. Millennials cannot imagine a world devoid of technology. For this generation, access to digital technology is almost viewed as a right. They are digital natives. While the leader may be a 'digital alien' he or she really must migrate from overhead projectors to revolutionary information delivery systems. This is where the Millennials could be engaged to come alongside the leader and engage with them. It is a shame that some contemporary leaders have no idea about the new world that is "liking" itself away on You Tube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Wikipedia etc. Most Millennials are techno savvy. I am, however, also aware of some leaders from the Baby Boomers generation who have been very intentional about being digitally intelligent. I admire these because it takes twice the effort of Millennials to be of this class. Leaders who care to remain relevant and connected to the highway of information and to be technologically intelligent will have to be willing to invest in technology.

An upgrade is also needed in the realm of *personal leadership*. While gifts, talents and abilities are great and may have helped you to climb the ladder to your current position, they do need to be backed by evidence of

leadership development. We live and work in a world that is very much interconnected and where networking has become a crucial component of how business and ministry is conducted. In this context it is important that leaders are well informed and are able to articulate organizational or ministry issues with colleagues within or outside the organization. A growing knowledge of the issues involved in leadership and ministry is an added advantage when engaging with others. Many leaders see the importance of upgrading themselves but are generally only capable of dreaming of these things in theory and therefore fail to appreciate them beyond rhetoric. Such leaders will eventually become insecure and may cause all sorts of relational problems to their team – especially to their subordinates who seem to them to be academically and professionally challenging.

Personal leadership upgrade becomes even more crucial because we live in an ever-changing world. An upgraded leader will welcome change as something which is essential to produce progress and innovation and ill develop the same willingness to adapt speedily to changing circumstances as his team. An upgraded leader will demonstrate agility in adapting working practices and processes when changing circumstances require it and will promote such agility among others. It is rewarding to invest in a good leadership upgrade. It is a lot cheaper and more rewarding than investing in the bureaucracy needed to compensate for poor leadership.

In a world where there are ever increasing demands on leaders to perform and deliver it will always be hard for them to set aside time to upgrade themselves. It will take intentionality and discipline on the part of leaders to upgrade themselves professionally and academically. A variety of courses are on the marketplace now and leaders should try to connect with them. Most of these courses are offered either as in-house training or can be accessed in other ways, preferably via on-line studies. However difficult it maybe to achieve, leaders must include continuous upgrading by formal or informal education as part of their personal development plans. It is said that leaders are readers and readers are leaders. Personal upgrade is not just directed at self but at others as well. Upgraded leaders move in three directions – up, out and down. They move upward as they seek to upgrade themselves; sideways as they connect with others in their organization as well as outside; they also move downward as they seek to upgrade others. I would like to focus on the downward-upgrading of others. One of the key responsibilities of a leader is to raise other leaders so they can realize their optimum potential. It is for this reason that an effective and futuristic leader will be either *coaching* or *mentoring* others into positions of leadership. Every progressive leader should have on their PRD (Position Result Description) or Job Description the developing and training

of new leaders. Good leaders do not just appear from nowhere over-night. They are a result of someone who has invested time and resources to develop them. If a leader discovers that his or her organization lacks leadership, it is probably a bad reflection on the existing leadership. If it is to be achieved the costs of upgrade need to be put in the organization's budget. A casual approach to upgrade leadership program or plans will produce casual and catastrophic leadership to the detriment of the organization.

In many organizations there are few accountability processes or mechanisms in place for those in power, or those in place are ineffective. In fact, some of these mechanisms have probably become archaic and obsolete. The ever-changing environment of business or ministry calls for new and dynamic forms of accountability. *Accountability mechanisms and processes* need to be upgraded. Ministries or businesses are so inter-connected that the accountability mechanism must also go beyond the leader's own organization. Let me illustrate: Mumba is CEO of a large Christian ministry that works with children-at-risk in many parts of the sub-Sahara region. It came to Mumba's attention that a sister organization with which her ministry had done business was planning to engage children to produce traditional table mats that would be sold overseas to raise funds to send these children to school. Mumba was not slow to contact the CEO of this company to register her displeasure. She viewed this move by the other ministry as a sheer exploitation of the children. In our world where networking and co-operation between entities is inevitable there will be demands placed on us that call for ethical decisions and good ministry etiquette both from our ministry and from co-operating partners. Mumba's ethical approach was based on the premise that a leader's credibility is the result of two aspects: what he or she does (competency) and who he or she is (character). A gap between these two aspects creates an integrity problem.

Mumba believed that the highest principle of leadership is integrity. When integrity ceases to be a leader's top priority, when a compromise of ethics is rationalized away as necessary for the "common good' and when achieving results becomes more important than the means to their achievement, then we know that a leader is treading on slippery ground and on the way to failure.

It is imperative that as a leader you constantly subject your life and work to the highest scrutiny. Ask yourself questions such as, "Are there areas of conflict between what I believe and how I behave?" Has compromise subtly crept into my operational tool kit? I would recommend that one of the best ways to find out is for you to ask the people you depend on if they ever feel used or taken for granted. In other words, hold yourself accountable to your people.

The upgrading of accountability mechanisms and processes must be in place within our organizations before we can demand the same from our partners. It is not enough to continue with yesterday's rules on accountability. The leadership must be intentional and deliberate in ensuring that they are continually upgrading their accountability in order to combat some of the ungodly belief systems and philosophies that are constantly threatening the organization. In a world were morality and everything that is godly is being redefined the need for upgrading our accountability mechanisms cannot be over-emphasized. A Lack of accountability upgrade has permitted leaders to deceive and fail their followers because there were no consequences for failure. Some leaders have charisma and are good orators who will get up and shout out all kinds of beautiful rhetoric. After they get their thunderous applause and step down off the podium, there are no systems or mechanisms that exist to hold them accountable to those words. They know this for sure, since they have gotten away with it several times before.

I would like to conclude this section by pointing out that leaders need to upgrade their own self-management. It is very helpful for a leader to follow a self-accountability program. If, as a leader, you do not take care of yourself, no one else will. Unless you are blessed by being surrounded by more-sensitive-than-normal followers, nobody will pick up on the signs of your fatigue and stress. You may wish to know that as a leader you are often perceived to be superhuman, running on unlimited energy. You are superman!

After being in leadership for many years I have discovered that while leadership is invigorating, it is also tiring. I often have to remind myself to take care of my physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs if I am to last in this 'game'. I have developed a personal accountability gauge. When I feel my gauge approaching "empty" I intentionally make time for refreshment and replenishment. I am learning to clear my schedule and take care of myself. I believe it is absolutely vital to my leadership that I continue to grow and develop; a task that can be accomplished only when my tanks are full.

Anticipate Risk and Failure

Show me a leader who has been successful, and I will show you a leader who has failed at one point or another. Leaders establish an environment that allows for risk-taking, pushing the envelope, and challenging the process. These are people who have often been tempted to give up, but quitting was not an option. Something inside them gave them the drive, the

resilience and tenacity to keep forging ahead. Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama dared to conquer the oceans in order to discover the world and facilitate trade and commerce. At the risk of failure, Thomas Edison gave us the light bulb after many, many attempts. Charles Goodyear went bankrupt a few times before he finally vulcanized rubber – Goodyear tyres are now a household name. Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States of America made previous unsuccessful attempts at becoming President. The list is endless.

Individuals who have been successful in business or ministry have had to take risks several times in life. As we have seen some failed many times, but they never gave up. A good leader is a risk taker as well as a 'successful failure'. The road to success is punctuated with discouragement, failures and risks. Without these we would have no need for the word 'success' in our vocabulary.

Successful leaders are motivated by a desire to succeed and not by a fear of failure. They may consider failure as an option, but they will never quit. They learn from their failure and position themselves for improvement and success the next time. Failure becomes a learning curve that helps them to strategize and do better in future. They look at the event or project as the failure and not at themselves. They externalize the failure. For these leaders' failure does not describe them; failure is an event.

Sometimes, as leaders we are daunted by our own success. We begin to ponder whether we will be able to sustain our outstanding performance. We fear that we have set the bar too high for ourselves to sustain it. Past successes can indeed create pressure for leaders. If we are not careful this pressure can actually paralyze us resulting, ironically, in our under-performing. My own experience has been that the longer I am successful the higher my perceived cost of failure. When a leader is driven by the fear of failure, they will not be able to take reasonable risks because they want to do only the tried and proven. They are no longer attempting any innovation; the very virtue that was responsible for their success initially.

Each leader must ask themselves which is more important to them; is it the attempt or the outcome? Leadership can be spelt 'Risk Taker' because in leadership you will need to be taking reasonable risks. These must indeed be reasonable risks, because as a leader you should never take reckless chances that may destroy what has been achieved. Equally, you are not paralyzed by fear. A good friend of mine expressed it this way: the leadership dance is two steps forward, one step back. It is about creating an environment for risk-taking but being cautious as well, yet without being over-cautious.

Leaders Must Lead

Late on a cold evening in April 1912 came these words, "We have struck iceberg [...] sinking fast [...] come to our assistance". The last bit of Morse code was tapped out. I understand these are the last words that were heard from the sinking ship. The Titanic was doomed as it slowly sank into its watery grave. One may dare to ask why the largest, most advanced ship of the century sank. If truth be told it will reveal that the Titanic was not sunk by the iceberg. It was sunk by failed leadership. Captain E.J. Smith failed to lead and take responsibility. More than 1200 people perished. To date the Titanic still rests on the bottom of the ocean, but we can bring to the surface the truth. Warning signs in life, from stop lights to prescription labels, are there for our good and we ignore them at our peril. They protect us from disaster, and we would be foolish to ignore them. There are a few lessons that leaders can learn from this tragedy that can help them become better leaders. I am not sure that this was Captain Smith's retirement trip, as some people have advocated. If it was then, most likely, Captain Smith looked forward to an easy life in New York. What made this man ignore seven iceberg warnings from his crew and other ships, we will never understand. Leaders must lead and are responsible for everything the organization does or fails to do. Leadership is not a position, a job title or, in the case of the Titanic, being Captain of the ship. Leadership is not just power, ego, privileges and pride. A good leader is ever present, touching, motivating, talking, and checking, facilitating, training, and preparing. It's about leading.

This subtitle looks like a redundant statement, but you and I know of leaders who are there by name only, but are not actually leading, much to the frustration of the people they seek to lead. I have come across leaders who have no idea what they are doing. A leader who is leading is a facilitator and equips others with tools and the critical information they need to perform efficiently and swiftly. A leading leader will assist people to set targets in line with the purpose, the goals and the strategy of the organization, and set them up towards success. A leader who leads well will act when there is need to discipline erring people and will assist poor performers to improve. Leadership is a lot of work, but it is the first and most important key to success. Leaders work hard and they do this by leading well.

The need for agile and well-informed leadership that is willing to lead is non-negotiable given the prevailing volatile situations ranging from politics to religion. Perhaps the biggest risk of failure in leadership arises because changes in our world are happening quickly, but organizations change so slowly that they are always lagging behind and are merely

providing answers to yesterday's questions. Today's questions need today's answers. Sadly, by the time it is absolutely clear that the survival of the organization is at stake it is often too late to do anything about it because the service or ministry offered is no longer relevant to the required degree. Even if such an organization survives it will be seriously damaged by the failure of the leaders to lead.

Often when failure to lead exists at the very top of a ministry or organization various senior leaders will try to fill the vacuum. Since the leader is not leading this can lead to protracted power struggles. The leaders below him may begin to compete for his position and will consequently block or undermine each other's initiative. Further, key people can get frustrated with this lack of proper, needed action and they will leave the organization, reducing its strengths even more. If the failure to lead is not arrested quickly it can become internalized and form a habit that can seriously weaken the leadership abilities in the organization and consequently make leading it much harder in the future.

Since a failure to lead has such serious consequences why do top leaders still fail to fulfill their leadership responsibilities? The answer is straight forward; it is because they think they have the option of not changing, or they know that change should take place but somehow do not have the muscles to execute it.

The option of not changing is not a valid option. That option is never available. I repeat, the option to ignore the requirements of contemporary needs is never available. Leaders who think inaction is a viable choice delude themselves. For such 'non-leading' leaders to think that they can continue to do what they like and feel comfortable with, or that they can implement changes at a rate or time that is convenient, rather than at the pace and time required, is setting themselves up for failure. It is a deadly delusion. This is often fed by the frequently intoxicating sense of power and control that comes with a leadership position. Leaders do not need to be reminded that no organization has the power to control the various needs and circumstances of the people 'out there'. The best that can be done is but to respond to changing conditions quickly and in the most relevant way with a sense of high integrity. Unfortunately, some leaders still fail to lead the implementation of necessary changes.

Leaders must be strong, passionate and compassionate about the people 'out there' in order for them to act and respond in a relevant manner. A leader without such qualities will do what comes naturally and what is easy and popular rather than what is needed, and the more so if that is difficult and unpopular. Lack of compassion, passion and courage can cause a leader to embrace the comfort of the familiar but ineffective.

Leading leaders take the risk of doing something new that is actually required by the situation, no matter how tough that decision might be. Leaders who fail to provide true and proper leadership, inspiration and strategic vision for their ministry leave a battered organization.

Resilience (Staying Power)

Sometime back I remember hearing a story of Akio Morita who co-founded Sony, a multi-billion-dollar company. Sony's beginnings were not so rosy. Believe it or not their first product was a rice cooker. It had one problem: it burned the rice. That did not stop Sony from moving on to building bigger and better things. The rest is history. I understand that before building his empire, Bill Gates started a business called Traf-O-Data which went nowhere, and he dropped out of Harvard. However, his passion for computers and his vision of the opportunities led him to start Microsoft. Resilience is an essential capability for bouncing back from setbacks. Resilience is hard, but necessary for effective leadership. Resilience is the courage to confront painful realities and the faith that things will get better even when there seems to be no immediate evidence for this. It is the tenacity to keep going against the odds.

I shall never forget a series of counseling sessions I had with one of my close friends, a Regional Director of an African-based Organization. As I listened to his story, I realized that he was struggling with resilience. My friend had been thrown off balance by the crises in his organization, although he was not aware of this. He had begun to experience anger, resentment toward his colleagues and his sleep pattern was disrupted. He began to project the blame outward, and I noticed he was slowly slipping into depression and was beginning to doubt himself. I reasoned with him that if the situation was left unchecked things could get worse and he could completely lose even the little ability he had to act with resilience.

My friend consulted a professional counselor and read many articles in order to come to terms with what was going on. He eventually recognized and acknowledged that he was off balance. Having reached this awareness, he then consciously took action to regain his foothold by engaging in a set of grounding and centering practices. This way he was able to channel his energy more adaptively and constructively. The counselor encouraged my friend to learn from his crisis and grow from it. Leaders are always on a learning journey.

Something else that helped my friend to re-focus was that he was advised to break from his routines and focus instead on healthy living, like exercise and self-reflection, as well as ensuring that he had sleep and rest.

Such centering activities were key to his path to recovery. They gave my friend greater clarity and became the source of new, out-of-the-box thinking, necessary to deal with his most vexing challenges.

As my friend and I reflected on what he had gone through he was also quick to mention that the counselor's advice for him to seek and develop strong social support systems was very beneficial too. He was able to tap into his social networks during those challenging times. He drew so much encouragement and reassurance from them, and they were an important source of new ideas and inspiration.

Resilience is a very important virtue enabling any leader to function effectively. There are many setbacks and challenges in leadership. If the leader lacks resilience this can lead to difficulties cascading down the organization. When faced with adversity the leader must act to ground and center himself or herself; intentionally bringing themselves back to an emotional and physical state where they can constructively confront their adversity.

For a Christian leader, resilience is as a result of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and faith in God even in the midst of volatile times, disruptions, interruptions, and setbacks. The Apostle Paul is one example of such a leader who had a high grade of resilience. In the midst of setbacks, persecution and misrepresentation he would state:

> "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:7-14).

The best example of a leader with perfect resilience is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. If there is one leader in human history who had every reason to give up, it was Jesus Christ. From conception to his resurrection his life

mired in controversy, opposition, death threats etc. The writer to the Hebrews articulates Christ's resilience when he says:

> "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:1-3).

Some setbacks are due to circumstances outside of a leader's control. But while leaders might not control the larger problem, they must control their reactions to it – whether to give up or find a new trajectory. Good leaders do not focus on what they are going through, the setbacks and challenges. Rather, they look at the destination – their final goal. This is what motivates them, and their current challenging context becomes their school to navigate their way to their destiny.

However, it is important to remember that resilience doesn't just happen. Resilience is determined by the strength of one's character and is informed by a core set of values that motivate efforts to overcome the setback and resume walking the trajectory to success. Resilience may involve self-control and willingness to acknowledge the leader's own role in failure. One must have a strong sense of community to be resilient i.e. the desire and intentionality to start off again because of an obligation to others, and because of support from others who desire the same outcome. Resilience is to be excited about the future and is action-oriented.

Be Accountable

President Harry Truman, 33rd President of the United States, had this inscription on his desk "The Buck Stops Here". He was one leader who was willing to take responsibility and be accountable for his actions and those of his leaders in his government. Many people want to be leaders but only a few are prepared to accept the *accountability* that goes with it. But you cannot have one without the other – where there is leadership, there will be accountability; it is as straightforward as that.

To be accountable is to accept responsibility for the outcomes, be they good or bad. It means that you do not blame others and neither do you blame the external environment. Accountable leaders nearly always make heavy use of the pronoun "I" when they get unexpected results. When

things go wrong, they do not find someone else or something else to blame. An accountable leader realizes that there are always things he could have done, or still can do, to change the outcome. It is sad to note that in many organizations leaders tend to avoid accountability for their actions. I am sure you have witnessed this bad pattern of behavior by some leaders.

It is ever so easy and rewarding for leaders of organizations to take the credit when things go well, but to find ways to avoid responsibility when they get unexpected results. This attitude will be short lived because accountability is too important for leaders to avoid it for long. Every leader needs to make every decision with the resolution that no matter what the outcome, they will take responsibility for the results. However, it must be noted that a leader will not succeed in the long run if they are not accountable in their *personal* lives. The perspectives of a wife or husband are often very important because they are the only ones who know how decisions might impact the couple and their family both immediately and in the future.

Then he or she must be accountable to his immediate team of leaders and to the rest of the organization. The leader must get feedback from those above and below him. It has been said that most leaders that fail, fail to get feedback. As a leader you must bear in mind that people who work for you and with you on a day-to-day basis know you the best. It is important that you establish a safe way to solicit and collect their feedback and input.

It is vital that once a leader receives the feedback, they act on it. If they do not, people will not respond when asked again, and such failure to act on feedback will be more damaging to their leadership than not having asked in the first place. It is advisable that the leader acknowledges the feedback they have received and explains how they have addressed it. This is a good sign that the leader cares and is willing to listen. Success on the part of a leader is a product of the feedback received from those who surround him or her. A leader who does not have a selection of formal and informal feedback mechanisms is courting disaster.

A wise leader will seek out candid feedback from colleagues and subordinates using a 360-degree review in order to discover blind spots that inhibit performance. Such review will also help the leader to appreciate that the only really dangerous deficiencies are the ones we refuse to confront. With such feedback the leader should take stock of their personal strengths and weaknesses and make the commitment to take necessary steps to achieve personal change. Experience has shown that executive coaching, time for reflection and testing, and focused concentration will help effect those changes.

It is always advisable for a leader to have a mentor or/and a coach. A coach can provide the leader with feedback and expertise, but his or her most important work is developing an action plan that makes leader accountable to his or her goals and provides the leader with the guideposts they need to measure progress. Meeting with your coach regularly makes you address issues that you might otherwise easily ignore.

A secure and healthy leader who is accountable and welcomes feedback has the following characteristics[14]:

1. A high degree of humility.
2. A willingness to hear unpleasant feedback.
3. A high level of self-awareness.
4. A healthy sense of self-worth which the leader can also create in others.
5. An intentionality to tolerate ambiguity.
6. An intentionality to tolerate uncertainty.
7. Will always maintain clear and logical thought even under great pressure.
8. Will know when to lead and when to 'be led'.
9. Will encourage solution-oriented feedback with which to adjust performance.
10. Will have an awareness that they do not have to be right all the time.

The bottom line is that no organization can grow and prosper until the leaders are willing to step up and take responsibility. As that begins to happen, it opens up a whole world of possibility.

Informed Leadership

An informed leader is one who is well connected with trends in all disciplines of life such as science and technology, business, economics, politics, etc. While one does not need to be an expert in these areas leaders should have some working knowledge of them because such knowledge will assist them to be relevant in their work and line of ministry. I believe that a major failing of current leadership models is this lack of 'general' knowledge. If you ask why church leaders and large Christian organizations should know about the geo-political conditions in the world today, I would reply

[14] Bill Cole, "When Leaders Don't Lead: The Consequences, Causes, and Cures for Leadership Failure". Source: http://www.mentalgamecoach.com/articles/When-LeadersDontLead.html [last accessed 05.06.2018].

because these will help them to plan and strategize prayer and missions. We are now residents of a global village and what happens in Timbuktu is likely to affect the people in Kathmandu. Who would have thought 40 years ago that the destabilization of North Africa and the Middle East would affect the whole of Europe? This has implications for the economies, politics and social dynamic of the countries taking on these immigrants and displaced people.

We are living at a time when terrorism is at our doorsteps. Good leaders will know and understand the causes of such terrorist groups as ISIS, Boko Haram, Jinja Weed, Alquenda, etc. and the instability these groups have caused across the globe. These groups' activities afford us opportunities to meaningfully and carefully engage them with the message of Christ. The World is also faced by the onslaught of Islamization. In Africa, Moslems have a 50-year plan to Islamize the continent. Muslims are strategic and intentional about this agenda. They are infiltrating the economic and business world in order to find access to the political platform. Unfortunately, the church in Africa has not yet woken up to this reality. To fail to see the various trends in our world today is to fail in leadership. The Bible gives us a good example of one of the tribes of Israel, Issachar, who were commended for being well informed and who acted on the knowledge they had: "[...] men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do [...]" (1Chr 12:32).

Be Willing to Change

Once a friend sent me this anonymous quote:

> "The larger an organization becomes, the greater its inflexibility. The more difficult and cumbersome to steer, to direct and to change. It soon becomes a bureaucracy where rules, regulations, policies, procedures and, 'I need permission to make a decision', become the norm. Today's businesses must change course quickly."

Change is inevitable and good leaders will embrace it. The leader must take the lead in envisioning, initiating and controlling change. Well-managed change will create opportunities, transform, and become a growth catalyst. A good leader will not be a victim of change but a catalyst for change. However, change must not happen for the sake of change. Change should always be a *Value Adding Change* (VAC) to the services or goods it is providing as well as to the organization. Therefore, the leader will need to define change, market the change and then effectively execute it.

The trouble with change is that for various reasons not many leaders are willing to change even when all indicators show they should. Someone once said, "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself". I believe that the changing of self is a useful starting point for any leader engaged in organizational change. There will be no meaningful change if there is a failure to address the underlying mind-sets and capabilities of the leaders who will execute it. Strictly speaking, organizations do not change but people do and as they change, they effect change in the organization. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the leaders to act as role models of change because in almost every organization people tend to defend the status quo despite the stated change goals. This is why leaders must play a major role in facilitating change. I have witnessed incidents where the majority in an organization has seen the need for leadership to effect change in some areas to keep the organization on track, and yet the leaders do not seem to act. The desire by the leaders to maintain the status quo will have negative effects on the organization. The thinking that made us successful yesterday is the very same thinking that will cause us to fail tomorrow if we resist change. Our unlearning curve must be greater than our learning curve. This way we will be willing to change and consequently remain relevant.

When a leader is unwilling to change lowered morale can spread throughout the entire team, which in turn can cause issues with both recruiting and retention. Additionally, when a leader spends time focusing on resisting the changes taking place in the workplace, he becomes less focused on doing the daily tasks associated with his job. This inevitably leads to a reduced level of efficiency and output from the leader and consequently to failure in providing leadership. Another negative effect when the leader resists changes may be a more disruptive work environment. A leader resisting changes may cause commotions with outbursts regarding the changes or a combative attitude with his team.

Insecure Leadership

Insecure leaders are very toxic to any organization. There are various reasons that contribute to leaders' insecurity. These may be family background, academic and professional inadequacies and challenges, as well as personality. However, insecurity caused by one's personality can be worked on with reasonable success as compared with the other factors mentioned. It is therefore important that a leader has a high score on self-awareness and continuously manages self-disclosure well.

Insecure leaders somehow think they cannot show any vulnerability because that will look like weakness. Instead, they create a persona they think looks better. It is not uncommon to see insecure leaders mask their weaknesses with bravado, and this is when problems occur as others perceive this characteristic as arrogance. In order to conceal their insecurity these leaders will portray a 'know it all' attitude and often tend to micro-manage people and fail to listen to others because only they know what needs to be done. Such behavior often leads to confrontations with their team as their frail ego cannot cope with being challenged in any way. Insecure leaders are often dictatorial and hence create a poor working environment founded on fear. The team does not feel valued, and people just do as they are told to avoid rocking the boat. This consequently creates a culture that lacks innovation and stifles creativity because the team is too scared to come up with new ideas or challenge the status quo.

Unlike insecure leaders, confident leaders think and behave differently – they celebrate their own achievements in a humble manner. They are quick to accept their strengths and weaknesses in a constructive and balanced manner and will view their lack of experience as something they have not developed yet. Secure leaders have a listening ear and surround themselves with colleagues who will challenge and support them.

Conclusion

The consequences of a failure to lead vary depending on the seriousness of the situation. The situation may range from poor leadership to leadership vacuum. Leadership failure has been responsible to many an organization's ills and downfall. Different institutions ranging from marriages to nations have had serious challenges due to poor leadership. The need for godly leadership in this generation cannot be over-emphasized. The Church must be leading the way in proving leadership of integrity. The world has had enough of fake and selfish leaders. It is therefore time for the Church to provide such leadership because godliness is a fundamental prerequisite for true great leadership.

Questions for Reflection

1. Think of effective leaders that you know or have worked with. What made them effective?

2. As you examine the ministry the ministry of Jesus Christ it is clear that he was an effective leader. Please illustrate from the Biblical texts how he manifested this effectiveness?
3. What steps are you going to put in place today to be more effective?

Memory Verse

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away (1Pe 1:1-4).

Chapter 5: Founder's Syndrome

"Founders go wrong when they start to believe their business plan will materialize as written. I advise entrepreneurs to burn their business plan – it's simply too dangerous to the health of your business." (Alexander Osterwalder).

Introduction

Lungu, a very keen evangelist and hard-working individual, had just retired from his teaching job. He opted to settle back in his home village somewhere near Chipata. Within a year, Lungu had been instrumental in establishing a church in the community. There had been no evangelical witness in this village. The impact of the Gospel was felt as the lifestyles of many of the adherents to the faith drastically changed for better. Lungu and his wife were the key players in this church. However, Lungu was wise enough to train and appoint elders after two and half years. This village church experienced unprecedented numerical growth. Unfortunately, in the eighth year of the life of this fellowship, church growth slowed down and some people left the fellowship. What led to this state of affairs? Simple. Lungu, as founder of the fellowship, viewed himself as the main custodian of the Church. The other leaders were expected to simply rubber-stamp Lungu's decisions. His views and opinions carried the day in the leaders' meetings. He became very arrogant and controlling while displaying an external form of spirituality. Lungu was experiencing what we term the "Founder's Syndrome". We do not have to look very far to see this syndrome at work in and around us. It is a syndrome that is responsible for the non-growth or even destruction of many a good work. Present at the foundation of every human institution are the seeds of its own destruction – if we are not careful.

Founder's Syndrome

Wikipedia also calls it "founderitis" and defines it as, "a popular term for a difficulty faced by organizations where one or more founders maintain disproportionate power and influence following the effective initial establishment of the project, leading to a wide range of problems for the organization"[15]. Founder's syndrome is a real problem that affects sustainability

[15] Wikipedia, "Founders Syndrome". Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founder%27s_syndrome [last accessed 12.12.2017].

of many small, medium and even large organizations/ministries/churches that evolve around an individual or individuals. It is one syndrome that Boards need to help founders grow out of, assuming that they too are not caught up in it. As we have seen a Founder's syndrome happens when an entity such as an organization/ministry/church or team operates primarily according to the personality of the founder rather than in compliance with its overall mission and philosophy. In this case the founder maintains disproportionate power and influence in the organization to the detriment of its health and of the workers. However, Founder's Syndrome is not necessarily about the actual founder of an organization. The main player could be the person who took over from the founder. It could be someone or a small group of individuals who salvaged the ministry from running aground and led it to clear waters. Or it could just be an individual or small group of individuals who has been at the helm of authority and power for a long time.

Founders are usually individuals of passion, strong personality and tenacity. These are individuals who can make quick decisions and motivate people to action. Such individuals are needed at the foundation stage of development, or at the rebuilding stage of the entity. They make things happen. However, once this phase is over, the decision-making needs of the organization must change and will require systems and processes for shared responsibility and authority. When the decision-making mechanisms remain unchanged, regardless of growth and changes in the organization, then Founder's Syndrome becomes an issue. We saw this with Lungu and the village church.

The main manifestation of Founder's Syndrome is that decisions are not made collectively. As in the case of Lungu, nearly all decisions are simply made by the "founder". The other leaders merely rubber-stamp what is suggested. Very often the founder creates the organizational culture, which is an extension of his or her style, personality, and preferences. The founder will strongly resist any change in the decision-making processes, if they might result in his loss of total control of the organization. Plans and ideas that do not originate from the founder usually do not go very far. I know of token Boards in some organizations that have been put together by the founder, not to govern, but to 'approve' what the founder suggests. Leaders with a strong Founder's Syndrome tend to relegate everyone else to the role of support staff, whatever the size of the organization. In other words, the founder is the decision-making structure and once the founder is no more the organization is in danger of collapsing. Founders must remember that they can do anything but not everything.

Manifestation of the Founder's Syndrome

The blog, "*Envisioning Consulting*" has an excellent article on, "5 Signs you're a victim of Founder's Syndrome"[16]:

1. Everyone can recite the Founder's story

There's the legend and lore of everyone's organization. We all know the heroic story of Rosa Parks or Malala, and while we're sure your organization is great, they're no national hero. Of all the major organizations in philanthropy, only one really bears the name of an individual person (and she died). If the employee handbook, about us page and donor letters continually herald the Founder's vision, you're not running a charity as much as a biopic.

2. The Board and staff roster reads like a 'friends and family' invitation

It's easier to get things done with your friends and family. After all, they are the people willing to show up and put the work in when "joe public" just wants to stay home. They don't complain about long hours! They love your long emails! And the best part? They almost never disagree. And for the friends – talk about job stability! It's a win-win! Except for the organization. Because friends and family organizations are less likely to be critical of the organization. Less likely to question anything from expense reports to impact statements. And that's the way that entrenched Founders like it.

3. There are too many plaques on the wall

You know it when you walk into the office. There's too much on the wall – and we aren't talking about degrees. We're talking about awards the Founder has accepted, pictures of their face (again) with celebrities and politicians, political proclamations littering the walls. And by the way, that corner office is HUGE while line staff share donated cubicle space. We're not saying it's not deserved, but it's painfully obvious to everyone when the organization is more about the Founder than about the cause.

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[16] "Envision Consulting". Source: http://www.envisionnonprofit.com/about-us/our-blog/88-blog/229-5-signs-you-re-a-victim-of-founder-s-syndrome [last accessed 04.01.2018].

4. Failure is preferable to replacement.

We've had Founders come to us and try to ensure that their organization cannot financially sustain without them. Whether that means they personally own the intellectual property being used by the charity or are storing all the vehicles on their personal property, they seek to ensure that the organization is indebted and tied to them. While our nation gets embroiled in an ugly job transition every four years, this person's term goes on seemingly forever, with NO ONE having the skills or work ethic to take it on. And should the organization try to change direction, there are bad Founders who would rather see it fail.

5. "Donations" seem to mean "Do as you please"

Actually, if you check this one, stop here and call us. Here's something we explain to Founder-led Boards quite a lot around here: donations do not belong to an organization to do what they please. Donation funds are public domain, stewarded by the Board of Directors in accordance with their mission and executed by staff according to the direction set forth by the Board of Directors. That's why you get the tax-deductible status. And that means that financial stewardship isn't just watching the bank balance, it means watching for mission-creep. It means that the Founder of your organization cannot just decide to start doing "other good things" of their own accord. Sure, your organization was designed as prison re-entry, but now we're going to rescue ferrets too! Or we're a homeless shelter, but we're also providing a business loan to Jean to start her own business! While these things are well-intended, when anyone starts feeling like your mission statement is "more of a guideline", they've overstayed their welcome.

Founders could be described as dynamic, driven, and decisive. They are pregnant with a clear vision of what their organization can be. They have researched and are certain of their constituency's needs and are passionate about meeting them. However, the Founder's syndrome very subtly creeps in and is evidenced in various ways and patterns. As observed above, the most obvious one is that the founder is at the center of all decision-making. He decides rapidly, with minimal or no input from the team. The team does not really know what is going on. Often the team can even become fearful of the founder. The founder will often be very instrumental in recruiting the Board, rather than the Board appointing itself. Often these Board members are relatives or close friends, and the staff consist of those who have personal loyalty to the founder. Such a Board has no teeth

as its role is relegated to that of supporting the founder rather than giving direction and creating policies for the organization. The allegiance of such Board members is to the founder and not the organization.

A serious case of Founder's syndrome is always in evidence when Board and staff members are not able to give satisfactory explanations in answer to important questions about the organization without first consulting the founder. In incidents like these, it would not be surprising to hear the founder use expressions like, "my ministry, my team, as a vision carrier ..." etc. The founder will usually resist any real or perceived change that threatens his loss of power and control. He will even resist constructive ideas and plans that may enhance the value and growth of the ministry because, "we have not done it that way before" or "the ministry will no longer be recognizable".

In reality, a Founder's syndrome is an organizational challenge because instead of working toward its overall mission, the organization operates primarily according to the personality of a prominent person in it. This prominent person does not necessarily have to be the founder; it could be the Board Chair, or the CEO who came along after the founder had left. Such a syndrome is then primarily an organizational problem. In other words, it is not primarily a problem of the person in the prominent position.

Healthy Attitudes for Founders

God has used and continues to use many people to birth ministries or organizations or churches. This is God's prerogative, and it is such an honor to be used in this manner. However, it is helpful to remember that once you have birthed it, it is no longer your baby. Throughout you are simply a steward. God is the rightful owner. It is very similar to what happens to our biological children; once they are born, they are their own persons. While it is true that as parents we can guide, teach and nurture our children; they remain persons in their own right. Similarly, "our" organization has its own persona; it's not "ours". The organization is a 'being' in its own right and is to serve its constituency. In other words, the organization is to be viewed as a gift from God to the constituency. The founder must always bear the following in mind:

1. God is the owner of the ministry

Most founders give theoretical acknowledgement that God owns the work, but their attitude and behavior prove that they own the work. They

hold on to power and control as long as they can. When their strength begins to fail them due to old age they pass on these ministries to their sons and daughters. They simply cannot trust anyone outside the family. In effect what they are saying is that they cannot trust even God to raise people other than themselves to manage the organization. Their organizations are so closely tied up with their own identity and security that they cannot let go the rudder of the ship. If a founder cannot even think of leaving or retiring because they feel that the organization would crumble without them, they have somehow wrestled it from God's hands. It is theirs not God's.

2. Work toward divorcing yourself from the organization because leadership is seasonal, generational, and transitional

The founder should be very intentional from the beginning that he or she has the responsibility to shape the organization so that it can live independently. What is true about raising our own children is true for an organization. A responsible and caring parent wants to see their children become independent of them. It is for this reason that they invest a lot in their children. Life happens. None of us will live forever. To so shape an organization that it depends solely on the founder is preparing it to fall and fail. It is unwise and irresponsible to run an organization as if we will, in fact, live forever. Such an attitude is unfair to the organization, and to the constituency that it serves. The best and only logical approach is to raise this 'child' (organization) to not need us. We declare independence for the child. What does this attitude require?

The founder must start out right and build it right. The founder must build it so that it can be sustained for the future. Establish the organization as if you will not be there to see it through its life span. Put it another way: think about the future while you are creating the organization's present. Think about your exit and how the organization will continue to function without you. Early in the life of the organization acknowledge that someday you will not be at the helm. The best way to ensure that your legacy is an organization that serves its constituency long after you are gone is to acknowledge, right at its founding, that you will not be there forever – and that you never know when that "forever" will start. Consider this and be conscious of it as you plan for your organization's future and you will likely put in place the needed measures and mechanisms to outlive you.

3. Perish the thought that the world owes you anything for having founded the ministry/church or organization.

Starting and building something worthwhile is not easy. Starters or founders will often have sleepless nights, shed tears, sweat blood, get into debt, be criticized and sometimes ostracized. But this is the prize they must pay for believing in the vision God has given them. However, truth be told, nobody owes the founder anything. While others around them may be very thankful and appreciative of the hard work they put into the organization, they really do not owe the founder anything. It is not easy for a founder to acknowledge that no matter how much they have contributed to nurturing the organization they have founded, none of that really matters in the long run. The sad truth is that nobody owes the founder anything for their sacrifices. It should never be about the founder's emotional needs or the recognition or gratitude the founder thinks they should get. The world doesn't owe the founder anything for having founded the organization.

These founders did the work because they cared, and they believed God to birth the work. Again, it is like raising children. It is every parent's desire to see their children 'payback'. This 'payback' is to see your children mature and face the world for themselves; make their own decisions and take responsibility for them.

4. Be constituency Focused.

Humans like to take pride in what they establish or achieve. They want their name to be associated with the organization they founded. They have a craving to control the entity they established. They do not seem to trust others to do a better job at giving leadership and exercising authority. Having worked very hard to get this entity off the ground they get the notion that it is about them. The ugly truth is that ministries or organizations are not about the founder no matter how much they sacrificed to give birth to it. The organization must be about the people its serving and have its own life. The founder must prepare the organization to survive and thrive without their presence.

5. The Subtlety of the "Vision Carrier".

A vision comes from God and with vision comes the passion and drive to see it come to pass. With a God inspired vision comes His grace to see that vision realized at one time or another. Conceiving the vision from God is

the easy part of the deal. Giving birth to and nurturing the vision is the challenging part. The persons who conceived the vision may be referred to as "vision carriers". A vision carrier will be the custodian of the vision and will 'sell' the vision to others. Once there is 'buy-in' the vision is well on the way to birth. Eventually the vision may be realized and serve the constituency for whom it was meant. However, the reality is that life is organic and over time things may change around the vision. It becomes necessary to make minor or major decisions that will affect the vision. It is here that vision carriers and founders fail and find themselves 'out of business'. There is need for flexibility and, most importantly, discerning the leading of the Holy Spirit.

While it is true that it was the founder's vision that established the organization in the first place, it will probably have grown since then and matured and this may eventually require a change or adjustment to the vision. The needs of the constituency and the dynamics in which the organization serves will likely have changed dramatically too. If that is the case, then maintaining the same way of 'doing business' and thinking in the same way as in the past is not the best practice for the organization, nor for the constituency it continues to serve. The people are not there to serve the organization. It is the other way around – the organization must serve the people.

The Tyranny of the Founder's Syndrome

Usually, at the establishment of an organization the founder will hand-pick staff and the Board members – often his friends, relatives and peers or whomever seems most loyal and accessible. In the case of not-for-profit, founders usually perceive their Boards as mostly a source for fundraising and will work to remove Board members who disagree with them. Such a Board is often unable to move the organization to the next level of development unless, which is rare, these Board members were picked for their skills and experiences. The allegiance of the staff and initial Board is usually to the founder and not necessarily to the ethos of the organization. This will adversely affect the health of the organization, since a healthy organization arises only from a healthy Board. If the Board, as a whole, is depending on the founder for everything from its vision to serving the constituency, then it is time to think seriously about developing, training and restructuring the Board to enable it to give leadership to the organization. If the organization is to survive and thrive into the future, the board will have to understand its role, and it will have to be populated by people with the required skill-set, expertise and knowledge.

When an organization is first established the founder should find a professional coach or mentor who can help him or her work out the personal aspects of their future 'separation' from the organization. This should be done at the start even though they are not going anywhere immediately but merely thinking about this to ensure that the organization is ready when they do separate. This is highly recommended, especially for those founders who do not believe they possess a Founder's Syndrome!

Another way to guard against the damage Founder's syndrome can do is to establish and codify the vision and values that are at the heart of the organization. Because founders often have a very difficult time letting go of the strategies that worked previously in the organization this fresh look at the vision and values help them to see that the organization can no longer function in the old way. The newly articulated vision and values will have to be adhered to and respected by all, including the founder.

The creation of a working philosophy and accountability processes will guide both the Board and staff's future decisions. It is very important that the founder makes himself or herself intentionally accountable to the Board and this must be reflected in the governance and administrative documents. Founders have a bad habit of being skeptical about planning, policies, and procedures. Their usual axiom is, "These processes and procedures weigh and slow me down." The founder must realize that as the organization grows and matures it can no longer be run like a business in one's garage. Despite their difficulties in letting go of the strategies that worked previously such founders must no longer make reactive, crisis-driven decisions with little input from others.

A succession plan ought to be created. This document should deal proactively with all the issues that the organization fears might transpire when the founder leaves or is no more and include plans to mitigate those feared consequences. As an example, a succession plan will deal with what will happen when the founder, who likely is the best fundraiser they could ever ask for, has gone. If this is one of their fears then they ought to find a proactive way to deal with it, such as to train and raise a team of financial developers with a passion for the mission of the organization. The founder must be deliberate about introducing these financial developers to his or her contacts. Whatever the fear, the founder and Board should ensure that the succession plan deals with it proactively to ensure the development and survival of the organization beyond the founder's involvement. The beauty of this is that while the focus of this plan will be succession, it will yield the ancillary benefit that they will be building a solid organizational infrastructure that provides immediate benefits.

As we think of a succession plan, I have found Sophia Shaw's five succession planning steps to overcome Founder's Syndrome very helpful:

1. Start with a "contingency" succession plan. A contingency plan outlines who has decision-making authority if the leader is suddenly unable or unwilling to serve (the emergency "hit-by-the-bus," or, more optimistically, the "won the lottery" scenario). This plan ideally also describes the process the organization will use to determine a permanent successor.
2. Move next to "purposeful" succession planning. This is a process of continuous planning and training for future leadership: identifying who is ready to rise into a more senior position (either a staff or a board post); who could be ready over time or with training; and the organizational weaknesses – looking at the positions no one on hand will be ready to step into, even in time.
3. Document the plans you have created, and in the case of a contingency plan, consider whether consulting a lawyer would be prudent. For example, does your plan require a change in an estate plan or institutional by-laws?
4. Remember that planning for change, while sometimes scary, is part of our responsibilities when we join a board of directors or lead an institution of any size. The most successful boards and management teams never become stagnant and always carefully select new members of diverse backgrounds.
5. Trust that succession planning, especially when there is a founder involved, gives us an opportunity to exercise good stewardship, model personal leadership and bravery, and build trust among stakeholders. Everyone will sleep a little better at night, too.[17]

Drawing out a succession plan without a possible successor is planning to fail. Part of succession planning entails the training of someone who could replace the founder should something happen, even temporarily, which removes him or her from the organization. The founder needs to deliberately share and nurture the Vision and Mission of the organization in their successor. The founder should not feel threatened by such a plan because the success of an organization or ministry is measured by how well it sustains the gains of the leader and grows even more after the founder is long

[17] Sophia Shaw, "Five Succession Planning Steps to Overcome Founder's Syndrome". Source: http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/news_articles/2017/02222017-founders-syndrome.aspx [last accessed 04.01.2018].

gone. A secure founder whose identity does not lie in the position they hold in the organization and who is passionate about service delivery will be more than glad to have a successor by his or her side. The kind of danger being guarded against is that if the whole organization relies on the founder for its survival and he or she suffers a severe heart attack the organization will fail. Do not let the organization die with the founder. It is cheaper to bury one of the two than both. Hence, it is vital that the founder and the Board find someone with whom the founder can share their institutional knowledge and whom they can train-up to share the leadership load with them. A founder owes an obligation to the constituency their organization serves to see to it that the 'child' they birthed is strong enough to live on its own and contribute positively to the world long after the founder is gone.

There are some key questions that every founder must ask themselves to discover whether they are suffering from Founder's syndrome. Some of these are listed below. I recommend that the founder also asks the people around them to assess them by asking them the same questions.

1. Is my identity and significance tied up with my organization?
2. In meetings do I often remind staff about my ownership of the organization?
3. Can I say from the bottom of my heart that when I have moved on things will be done differently, and that will not bother me?
4. Do I often use the axioms, "my vision'", "my staff", "my organization"?
5. Do I have a neurosis of being needed? In other words, do I feel or brag about the fact that the organization cannot do without me?

Founder's Syndrome: Evolve or Die

The truth of the matter is that the mission, the vision, the story, the administration, the fundraising, the programs – the whole organization – is embodied in the founder. The founder alone knows where every cent of every donation went. By actions and attitudes the founder plays a pivotal role both in building the organization and giving it a future or in putting it to rest. If an organization is to continue to be relevant to its constituency it must continue to meet their needs. To do this the organization must evolve through a particular cycle of change. What worked for the organization yesterday may not work today since the constituency is always evolving as well. Both the organization and the constituency are organic. If there is to be culture and management change in an organization, it is

important to first establish a stable administrative structure. To bring about this kind of infrastructure will nearly always require a change the founder's leadership style from that of a highly reactive, individualistic style to a more proactive, consensus-oriented style. Unfortunately, not many founders can make this transition; the consequence is that the organization will remain managed according to the personality of the founder rather than in a manner that provides reliable services to its constituency. Where this is the case it is not unusual to see the organization experiencing the same problems over and over again. For example, there will be a high turnover of staff as people can become frustrated and move out quicker than they came. Those that stay on, for whatever reason, are frequently afraid of the founder.

On rare occasions the founder steps down gracefully, but for most organizations, getting the founder to accept the change in leadership is the most difficult problem of the transition. Naom Wasserman writing in the Harvard Business Review on 'Founder's Dilemma' observes:

> "Founders don't let go easily, though. Four out of five entrepreneurs, my research shows, are forced to step down from the CEO's post. Most are shocked when investors insist that they relinquish control, and they're pushed out of office in ways they don't like and well before they want to abdicate. The change in leadership can be particularly damaging when employees loyal to the founder oppose it. In fact, the manner in which founders tackle their first leadership transition often makes or breaks young enterprises."[18]

It has been observed more often than not that organizations whose founders stay too long do start to decline. It is easy to recognize Founder's syndrome when you see it, but often the founder is oblivious to it. The problem is made worse when the board is complacent, too loyal, or unwilling to take charge of the organization for fear of offending the founder. A board worth its salt will be able to recognize the problem and take strategic steps to find its way out of the situation. Founder succession can usually be managed well if the Board faces the issue squarely and focuses on what is best for the organization while remaining sensitive to the feelings of the founder.

Founder's Syndrome is subtle. No founder sets out to damage the organization which they worked very hard to establish. The founder may have a

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[18] Naom Wasserman, Harvard Business Review, "The founder's dilemma", (February 2008). Source: https://hbr.org/2008/02/the-founders-dilemma [last accessed 05.01.2018].

genuine fear of handing over the organization because he thinks it may be mismanaged. Where this is the case, the founder is consciously or unconsciously insinuating that no one else is as capable and as trustworthy as he or she is to run the organization. As pointed out earlier, it's much like saying, "God I really do not think that I can trust you to raise another leader who is as equipped and capable as I am". The founder may have genuine fear but, truly, if they see the organization as God's they must learn to trust Him to continue the work beyond and without them. If a founder remains stubborn even in the midst of evidence that things are falling apart it is likely that the donors to the organization will confront him or her. Often when this happens the founder becomes increasingly anxious and defensive and may resort to blaming someone else – maybe the Board members and staff. If there is no wise intervention the organization will fold.

However, there are some founders who eventually realize that they must change their leadership and governance style. They develop their leadership to the next level, so they can remain relevant and engaged with the dynamics of the constituency. They have leant to appreciate plans and budgets as guidelines and realize that these ultimately make their organizations more responsive to the needs of their constituency. They have learnt to make proactive decisions based on the mission of the organization and affordability as well as making team decisions based on responsibilities, training, and capabilities. They do not use the Board to rubberstamp their own personal decisions simply to raise money but value Board and team members for their strong expertise and feedback. At management or personal level, they communicate often and honestly and are willing to ask for and accept help. They have learnt to be patient with themselves, their Boards, and the team. Such leaders are safe and secure and are a joy to work with. Often, they will also take time to reflect and learn, particularly about their value in service to others.

Separation: Founder from Organization

For many founders it is very unsettling and threatening to think about the organization functioning without them. Others would not even want to think about their successors, and some avoid, or even sabotage, planning for an organizational future that does not involve them. When they do finally give up leadership many founders are at a loss as to what to do next. The change may be too much for them – from being the focus of the organization to being entirely sidelined. There is a feeling of loss and emptiness. Their sense of significance diminishes; their privileges are gone. Experience has shown that for many departing founders and long-time

executives, the most difficult issues to confront are the personal ones. They must face and think about their own future. Psychologically and emotionally, this is very difficult to deal with. They have lived and breathed their jobs for all the years of their involvement in the organization or ministry and find it difficult to imagine not having it in their lives. It is a real challenge both professionally and personally to let go of something that has consumed the founder for many years. It is wise for the process of 'divorce' to be managed carefully and prayerfully. The founder may require to be counseled so as to move on. Opportunities to serve elsewhere abound and the founder may continue to serve others in one of these. A founder who finishes well leaves a good legacy behind and will always be honoured and respected by those who come after them.

Organizations must guard against unnecessarily prolonging the founder's stay in power simply because he or she is a financial magnet. Organizations that continue to depend heavily on the fund-raising abilities of their founders simply reinforce the founder's notion that the organization cannot do without them. This will keep an organization from making a healthy transition to a new leader. In cases where a founder has passed-on the baton to new leadership it is inadvisable, especially in 'not-for-profit' organizations, for them to invite the old leader to serve on the Board because this may put the new leaders in the uncomfortable position of reporting to a former leader who continues to call the shots. When founders are asked to serve on the Board after they have separated from the ministry or organization there is a strong possibility they will want to act as consultants and influence the way things are done. This just prolongs the founders' departure and stifles the progress of organizations because new ideas are often shot down. While it is true that folk with long organizational tenure can be an asset they can also often prove to be a detriment to the organization. A word to the founder: Know when it is time to leave. Do not overstay your welcome.

At the point of separation, it is important to acknowledge the contributions the founder has made to the organization. The organization must find a way to publicly acknowledge their work and thank them for their service. It is also best practice to give them an award at a major event and issue a press release, so the separation with the organization is known to the constituency.

Conclusion

The inevitable reality of leading is that at some time a leader has to step down. Founders will have to give way to other leaders at some stage in the

life of the organization. Founders are celebrated as people who grow an organization from a vision through the challenging early stages into a dynamic entity. They possess strength of character, passion and the ability to lead. However, when not well-managed these skills may become hindrances in founder-led organizations if the founder fails to discern when to exit. The founder must have confidence and trust that the next generation of involved leaders will continue to ensure that the organization goes on to grow and serve its constituency. The reality of life is that as the organization grows the vision may evolve to meet the changing needs of the community and this may require a different type of leadership and skills which the founder may not possess.

A Case Study

Moonga was a very charismatic and personable character. He founded the 'Genesis Ministries' – a ministry that works with vulnerable people such as orphans and street kids. In the last 15 years that it has been in existence there has been a high turnover of staff. Moonga attributes the high staff turnover to lack of commitment on the part of those that have left.

Recently, management requested a meeting with Moonga to express their concern. Management's observation revealed a character profile of Moonga as a charming and inspirational leader who engaged in a dominating leadership that contradicted the organization's ideals, creating further contradictions which resulted in disrespected and disillusioned staff, and a founder unable to take responsibility for his leadership. Moonga had created a hierarchy in the organization which eventually led to a walk-out by staff in which he responded by outright firing them.

During the meeting Moonga could hardly see that he had subverted the aims of the organization. He instead that as founder he knew what was good for the organization. Within a week the entire Management team handed in their resignation notices. Imagine that Moonga, faced with this dilemma, has approached you to resolve the conflict and ensure that management changes their mind. Consider what are the issues are here. What course of action would you recommend for both Moonga and Management to take?

Chapter 6: Falling Out

"Conflict is neither good nor bad. Properly managed, it is absolutely vital." (Kenneth Kaye)

Introduction

Paul, with a smile, said, "Brother Barnabas it has been a while since we visited the Christians on our missionary trip. I really feel that we need to go back and check how they are doing."

With a gleam on his face, "What a brilliant idea brother Paul" responded Barnabas. "Maybe we could ask John Mark to accompany us again. I know he did not have a good experience in Pamphylia and the young man returned home", added Barnabas.

"Did I hear you right, Barnabas – did you mention the name John Mark!", retorted Paul. "Tell me you are not serious about taking John Mark. Have you forgotten how he deserted us when we most needed him? He almost jeopardized our mission. Therefore, I do not think it is wise to ask him to accompany us". Paul reminded Barnabas.

Barnabas was quick to react, "I know what he did but we all fail sometimes, and people must be given a second chance. John Mark is a gifted young man". Paul reacted, "If he comes with us then I am not going with you. I don't like folk that are discouragers and quitters".

"If you do not allow him to come with us then you might as well find someone else to go with you. I insist on taking John", stated Barnabas with a serious face. "Okay you can keep your John, and I shall look for someone else". Paul reacted angrily.

While these may not have been the exact exchange of words it was clear that these two spiritual leaders fell out at this point. The Bible says, "They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company" (Acts 15:39). Who would have thought that these early church spiritual leaders would fall out? But then falling out is human. What really matters is how you manage conflict. Actually, this conflict had the potential to harm the church, but the Lord did not permit this. Just think of the impact this might have had on the Christians otherwise. Thankfully, toward the end of his ministry Paul acknowledged John Mark's much needed contribution, not only to the ministry but to himself as an individual. "Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Tim 4:11).

Someone once said, "Life would be easier if it wasn't for people". Basically, the underlying statement was that it would be great to simply get along with life without interference and conflict from others. However, this statement is really an oxymoron as there would be no 'life' without others. We are created to live in community and where there is community the reality of conflict is to be expected. Conflict is a normal part of institutional life, and it presents numerous opportunities for growth through improved understanding and insight. Therefore, it should not always be viewed as a negative experience caused by abnormally difficult circumstances. But what is 'conflict'? It may be defined as a disagreement in which the entities involved perceive that there is a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. Sometimes conflicts may involve anger. Unfortunately, when persons get angry with each other, they often say or do things that are nasty.

The subtle aspect of conflict is that disputants tend to respond based on their perceptions of the situation, rather than on an objective view of it. Consequently, they filter their reactions and perceptions through their personalities, information, experience, values, culture, beliefs, gender, etc. It must be remembered that conflict responses are filled with ideas and feelings that can be very strong and powerful guides to peoples 'reaction and their possible solutions. Hence, the parties involved tend to perceive limited options and resources available in seeking solutions, rather than multiple possibilities that exist 'outside their comfort zone' for problem-solving. Usually, in a conflict situation, people tend to respond to the threat as they perceive it rather than to the true threat they actually face. Hence, their perception does not become 'reality' as such, but their behaviors, feelings and ongoing responses become modified by that evolving sense of the threat they confront. If someone is to manage the conflict constructively, they must take time to understand the true threat i.e. the real issue. Because conflicts tend to be accompanied by significant levels of misunderstanding that exaggerate the perceived disagreement considerably, it is always helpful to seek to understand the true areas of disagreement because this will help solve the right problems and manage the true needs of the entities.

Unfortunately, Biblical and Christian history is punctuated by numerous incidents of people falling out with one another due to conflicts. Therefore, we should not trivialize the 'power' of conflicts. Conflicts tend to be far more complex and powerful than we often think because they involve continuing relationships which have complex, emotional components. In resolving conflicts there are always procedural needs and psychological needs to be addressed within the conflict, in addition to the

substantive needs that are generally presented. This explains why the satisfactory resolution of most conflicts can prove so challenging and time consuming.

Conflict Is a Reality

Have you noticed how reality TV programs that involve conflict have become very popular in the last few years? Ironically, in real life when people are not in front of a camera, conflict does not make for a good life. For better or for worse conflict is a part of life. Unarguably, it is the least favorite part of life, and we will all experience it if we experience other people in our lives. We will have confrontations with people when their ideas and wills come into conflict with our own ideas and wills. It is as if you are enjoying a moment of quietness in the verandah of your rented house and suddenly someone invades your space and starts shouting at the top of their voice. You think to yourself, "*Where did this person come from? Why is he in my house? How do I get rid of him?*" You become upset with him. He then looks in your direction and tells you that your landlord is a friend of his and is just checking on his friend's house. The garden boy confirms that truly he is a friend of your landlord.

We tend to see life as our own rented house and when another person intrudes into our space, we wonder why that person is there. Then the conflict ensues. You wonder why this person has invaded your space. The other person also wonders the same about you – why should you be surprised at him checking on his best friend's property – after all you had an agreement with the Landlord that the house would be inspected from time to time. This someone was shouting because you had earphones plugged into your ears!

The house represents your ideas, assumptions, and experiences in life, and your relaxing represents your plans, goals, and way of life. You will realize there are other people that your landlord has relationships with as far as the house is concerned. You will have disagreements concerning your values, political understandings, aspirations, and these principles will not match up with those of others. Our entitlements and claims to personal rights and privileges in our postmodern world has increased the chances for conflict today in ways that would have been unheard of in years past. Today, the urgent need to manage our relationships with care and veracity is greater than before. If not, we will constantly be experiencing conflict, and the chances are that our relationships may not recover. It is, therefore, important we have a goal or some kind of plan as to how to respond to people who unexpectedly invade our space.

A ministry will just be going about its usual business, then suddenly someone shows up unexpectedly to invade its space – there is conflict in the ministry. People begin to take sides, arm themselves up for battle and the gossip grows and spreads like a cancer. Conflicts sometimes have the habit of giving short or no notice at all. Hastily you begin to witness personalities and self-determination taking control of the situation and people start seeking their own interests over sound reasoning, the truth, and the vision of the ministry. What follows are arguments of persuasion with the skewing of truth designed to produce self-determined outcomes and consequently peace and unity escape through the window.

Approaches to Conflict

Some years ago, while serving as Principal of a Bible College, I took a team of departmental heads for a Leadership Retreat to address some critical issues affecting training and staff interpersonal relationships. It was with much excitement that we undertook this exercise for we were determined to work through these issues. After much prayer the items on the agenda were tabled. The behavioral patterns that emerged during the Retreat could clearly be categorized into the well-known conflict styles.

One of the newer staff clearly advocated his own needs over the needs of others. His communication was rather aggressive, dominating the discussion and he had less regard for future relationships. I noticed that this gentleman's real fear was the loss of control of the whole event in case the solutions failed to meet his needs. He felt threatened by the would-be outcome. This is what would be termed as a '*Competing*' style of conflict. The consequence of this is that a person may force others to accept 'their' solution, but this acceptance is likely to be hypocritical and may be accompanied by fear and resentment.

One of the leaders at this Retreat was a very shy and quiet lady. She was often slow to speak but when she spoke, she made very insightful and worthwhile contributions. She avoided conflicts and loved to be the peacemaker in the room. She would rather yield her own needs to those of the team. She was the kind of person who would permit the needs of the group to overwhelm her own. While she would not articulate this, her withdrawn character and quiet demeanor betrayed her. She was an '*Accommodating*' person. Some would refer to her as a 'smoothing' character. The consequence of such a character is that while she saw the preservation of the relationship as the most important issue she may also build up frustrations that her own needs are going unmet.

It became obvious during the discussions that two of my team were the type that did not want to talk about the challenges we were faced with. They wished the problems would somehow disappear into thin air. These were the '*Avoiding*' type. The bad side of this kind or personality is that feelings get bottled-up, views go unexpressed, and the conflict worsens until it becomes too big to ignore, and it eventually destroys the relationship. Letting needs and concerns go unexpressed will inevitably lead to confusion and a broken relationship.

On the third day of our Retreat one of my colleagues walked up to me and said that we may have to find the middle ground if we were to make progress on two key issues. We refer to this personality as '*Compromising*'. As a leader, I was not convinced that this was the way to go for what was at stake was a matter of a Biblical principle. I was aware that while compromise may be satisfactory it is generally not satisfying because parties remain shaped by their individual perceptions of their needs and do not necessarily understand the other side very well. Conflicting parties often retain a lack of trust and avoid risk-taking involved in more collaborative behaviors. However, one of the dangers of compromise is that while parties may feel fine about the outcome, they may still harbor resentments in the future.

On the last day of the retreat the pressure had mounted on me to push for decisions that would be welcomed by all. This may be referred to as '*Collaborating*'. This would have been the easy way out – a 'win-win problem solving'. While I tend to operate in this sphere, there are times when this may not be a solution at all. Collaborating is good as it harnesses individual needs and goals toward a common goal as well as bringing energy, and ideas to resolve the dispute. On this occasion I settled for collaborating, since the majority of the team felt that the Holy Spirit was leading us in a particular direction on training. I have since discovered that collaborating may provide a good platform for future understanding and goodwill.

The Inevitability of Conflict

Conflict is normal and normal healthy relationships will experience their share of it. In relationships between people or organizations where a certain amount of dysfunction is already being experienced conflict will come in greater quantities. Conflicts are predictable and to be expected. They arise naturally as we go about managing complex and stressful situations in which we ourselves are significantly invested. Conflict is an outgrowth of our sinful nature over which we are supposed to have dominion but often fail. Hence, conflict is something we all are capable of causing and

when we do, we must be involved in its resolution. We can only contribute to its ending when we take responsibility for it. We must acknowledge the pain we inflict upon one another by our sinful natures through gossip, slander, anger, factions, arrogance and pride.

Conflicts can sometimes be very interesting in that the true disagreement may be different from the perceived disagreement. It is also interesting to note that at times people are really surprised to learn they are a party to the conflict, while at other times folk are shocked to learn they are not included in the disagreement. Social systems, such as family, are influenced to participate in the dispute, whether they personally fully understand the situation or not. They find themselves obliged to take sides based upon their relationship with the warring parties. Sometimes they will take sides based upon past issues and relationships with the opposing party.

Benefits of Conflict

It seems illogical to state that conflict has its own benefits. However, it must be remembered that conflict is not always something evil or bad. In Christian ministry in the Church God will allow all things to work for good for His glory. Sometimes, a church can split and then there are two and so forth, a way of church planting. While this is not desirable God can use it to multiply disciples. We saw this in the case of the conflict between Paul and Barnabas. They each went their own way but each of them had an effective ministry – although not much is recorded about Barnabas's and John Mark's ministry.

Sometimes, conflict draws people together for a cause and provides perspective which would not have arisen apart from the conflict itself. We have seen how in the past few years following the unstable political situation in countries such as Syria, various initiatives have been started by religious and non-religious groups to abate the suffering of the migrants from such troubled countries. Many of these charitable organizations or NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) will also advocate for the human rights of the displaced people which otherwise would have been unrecognized or denied if there had been no conflict in their countries.

Conflict has opened opportunities for displaced people from countries where the Gospel cannot be proclaimed freely to hear it outside their borders. While Christians do not rejoice in the suffering of such people, they nevertheless give thanks to God for the opportunities to share the love of Christ in Word and in action.

Conflict can open opportunities for the community of faith to practice forgiveness and reconciliation and show to the world that we are indeed

children of the reconciling and forgiving God. Over and over again I have seen how a well-managed conflict can be healthy and inspire growth in the church and in people spiritually. At an individual level in church life there is that conflict that comes about because of sin, when a person is disciplined, and comes to repentance and restoration. He or she grows and becomes more effective for Christ as opposed to the situation where there is no discipline and they keep on living in sin.

Conflict Solving Mechanism

Conflict can be detrimental to your organization or church life and ministry performance unless it is managed well. Possessing the necessary skills to resolve conflicts effectively is one of the biggest challenges in today's Christian ministries and is vital to ministry success. To remind you, conflicts must be anticipated, and they contain substantive, procedural, and psychological dimensions that must be negotiated. If they are well managed, they can become good tutors for transformation and provide opportunities for growth and learning. Hence, it is essential that creative problem-solving strategies are developed to provide positive approaches to conflict management ready for when conflicts arise. Where possible, in every conflict the aim should be to transform the situation from one in which it is 'my way or no way' into one in which we entertain new possibilities that otherwise would be elusive. Therefore, we need to develop procedures for identifying any conflicts which are likely to arise, as well as adopt systems through which we can manage conflicts in healthy ways.

Below are some suggested abilities which will help you when trying to put in place conflict solving mechanisms.

1. The ability to identify the times when conflicts tend to occur. For instance, if conflicts occur in the last segment of your meeting in the late hot afternoon, then you may wish to review your schedule. If you have your meetings when the team is overwhelmed by workload then conflicts are more likely to happen then.
2. The ability to identify how people respond to conflicts as they happen. For instance, some people tend to withdraw and ignore while others may develop a negative attitude toward work. Others may be very confrontational and expressive.
3. The ability to develop systems and procedures for addressing conflicts which may arise in the future and not just dealing with the current ones. Such a structure involves having open and

honest team meetings. Team meetings may be useful channels for expressing normal problems and concerns in a predictable, reliable manner. They often replace gossip and back-biting.

4. The ability to identify the key or likely sources of conflict in a relationship or an organization. For example, if the major source of conflict is from human resource policy, then you may need to review your human resource policy.

How to Respond to Conflict

Not many people have mastered the healthy skills of dealing with conflict. Most are overwhelmed when faced with a conflict. It not uncommon to hear comments such as:

> "That guy! Who does he think he is! He thinks he can come here and push everyone around. I shall show him that I am not the type that he can boss around."

> "She is impossible to reason with, ... she shouts at me."

As we address the issue of conflict it is important to remember that conflict involves emotional, cognitive and physical responses. A good understanding of one's thoughts, feelings and physical responses to conflict helps to get better insights into the best potential solutions to the situation. Let us briefly examine three responses.

Emotional responses are feelings one experiences in conflict and may range across anger and fear to despair, confusion and resentment. Emotional responses may be subtle, because individuals may assume that others feel the same as they do.

Cognitive responses have to do with 'self-talk". In other words, these are one's ideas and thoughts about a conflict. The person internally plans and strategizes such ideas as responses, action to take etc. A person's approach to cognitive responses will determine their emotional and behavioral responses. For example, 'self-talk' may result in positive or negative feedback to the issue at hand.

*Physical responses have to do with a person's response that can be seen by others. These may include bodily tension***,** increased perspiration, accelerated breathing etc. These responses play a vital role in a person's ability to meet their needs in the conflict. Anger or Stress Management techniques may be helpful in dealing with physical responses.

What Are Some of the Factors that May Cause Conflict?

There are various factors that contribute to form the perceptual filters through which conflict is experienced. Consequently, the possible reactions of a person to the threat and dilemma resulting from conflict should be anticipated. These may include varying understandings of the situation. We can expect that in many conflicts there will be significant misunderstanding of each other's perceptions, needs and feelings. Hence, these factors contribute to a person's perception that during conflict the situation may be overwhelming and unsolvable. On the other hand, an awareness of these factors, may become critical sources of potential understanding, insight and possibility. There are many factors that contribute to conflict. The list is almost inexhaustible, but I would like to identify some of the common factors that I have come across.

Gender: Male and female perceive things from different perspectives and sometimes fail to realize that different does not mean wrong. Women 'see' with their emotions whereas men mainly see with their eyes and less with their emotions. It is this difference that makes gender what it ought to be i.e. complimentary. Male and female are like two jigsaw pieces that fit together nicely. If these pieces were the same, they would not complete the picture.

In addition, males and females often perceive situations differently, based on both their experiences in the world and their socialization patterns. Consequently, men and women will often approach potentially conflicting situations with differing mindsets about the desired outcomes from the situation, as well as the set of possible solutions that may exist.

Past experiences: It is said that we are all products of our own history. We all work with folk who have had profound, significant life experiences that continue to influence their perceptions of contemporary circumstances. Sometimes these past experiences have left folk fearful, lacking trust and confidence, and consequently reluctant to take risks. The flip side may be true that previous experiences may have left some folk confident, willing to take risks and chart unknown territories. Whichever side of the coin applies to us we must acknowledge the role of previous experiences as elements of our perceptual filter in the current situation.

Cultural Background: Different cultures deal with conflict differently. Culture influences people to hold certain beliefs about the social structure of their world, as well as the role of conflict in a given experience. Depending on one's worldview some people have learned to value substantive,

procedural and psychological needs differently consequently influencing their willingness to engage in various modes of negotiation and efforts to manage conflicts. Other cultures are at a loss as to how best to deal with conflict because conflict may be seen as failure and shameful and as a result, they will avoid it. This is certainly true for 'shame and honour' cultures.

Operating on assumptions: Good communication requires that a message is acknowledged or confirmed. If this is not done, then the sender must assume that the receiver fully understands the message that was sent. Unfortunately, this may not be the case and both the sender, and the receiver can be wrong. To act on assumption could lead to misunderstanding. It is, therefore, vital to acknowledge and confirm the message. The receiver in confirming the message must be careful not to arrive at a conclusion for the sender. If the message is not clear the receiver should ask for confirmation in question form. This is very important, especially in oral communication.

Lack of information: We tend to respond to given conflicts on the basis of the knowledge and information we have about the issue at hand. To avoid bias and showing our ignorance, it is important that we have all the facts regarding the subject matter at hand. Often conflicts occur because some people have been misinformed. Sufficient information can influence the person's willingness to engage in efforts to manage the conflict. Asking questions instead of using conclusive remarks is a good tactic for dealing with conflict. For example, you may wish to say, "Please help me understand how you are not responsible for that accident?" instead of, "Your carelessness caused that accident".

Confront Conflict

> "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Mt 18:15-17).

> "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5:23-24).

Confronting conflict is no mean task for most people and the willingness to do so depends on their culture background, personality and other

factors. Some people when engaging in dialogue and negotiation around conflict tend to approach it with fear and hesitation. Often, they may fear that the conversation will go worse than the conflict has gone thus far. Often, it is here that the self-talk kicks in again. Sometimes people may justify their not-addressing the issue, expecting the other person to take the initiative to talk to them. Following the path of avoidance is made even worse if they have a history of conflict with the individuals involved in this current conflict. In this case people will filter their perception of the situation based on the past and then be reluctant to engage.

The other issue I would like to bring to our attention as we look at confronting conflict is that we sometimes seem to espouse and reward other ways of responding to conflict than by negotiation and collaboration. Ironically, folk who aggressively pursue their needs, competing rather than collaborating, are often tolerated by others who prefer to accommodate them. Is it not odd that leaders are often rewarded for their aggressive, controlling approaches to conflict challenges than for their more compassionate approach to issues? It is no wonder that those who raise issues and concerns, even respectfully, are quickly perceived to be problematic and therefore they are avoided and minimized and sometimes shut up. The need for the leader to model negotiated solutions to conflicts cannot be over-emphasized.

It must be appreciated that negotiation requires profound courage on the part of all concerned. It requires courage to honestly and clearly articulate your needs, and it calls for courage to sit down and listen to your perceived rival. You have to be courageous to look at your own role in the dispute. It also requires courage to approach others with a sense of empathy, openness and respect for their perspective on the issue. If, as I suggest, there needs to be collaborative approaches to conflict management then people must engage in the moment of dialogue in profound and meaningful ways.

Types of Conflict

Intrapersonal

This is the conflict that is found within an individual. Such a conflict is not always easy to identify but manifests itself when a person has difficulty in choosing between two or more options. Sometimes this is seen in mood swings, depression etc. For serious intrapersonal conflicts, it is recommended that people consult trained professionals.

Interpersonal

This is a conflict that involves two persons arising because people respond in different ways to disagreements, with personal feelings, attitudes and motives contributing to the conflict. This type of conflict may be healthy provided the people involved can employ good ways of resolving it. The best outcomes see folk develop self and other awareness as well as learn the skills for collaboration and compromise.

Intragroup

Sometimes conflicts happen within a given group or department. It is not unusual to have interpersonal conflicts affect the group's productivity and workplace morale. Common examples of intragroup conflict may include cultural differences, gender prejudice, perceived or real injustices and certainly personality differences. Some of these conflicts may require the intervention of a trained or experienced conflict manager.

Intergroup

It is not unusual to witness battles between two departments or ministries. For example, there may be misunderstandings, accusations and counter accusations between the finance department and the ministry leaders based on the budgets and financial accountability. Sometimes perceived differences in status and different group objectives can contribute to intergroup conflict. The lack of communication, or miscommunication, between departments can also lead to conflicts resulting in the organization's inability to function as it should.

Sources of Conflict

Behaviorists identify a number of types of conflict. Knowing the type of conflict is one of the first steps toward resolving it. People are often overwhelmed by conflicts because they fail to identify the profile of the conflict. A few of these different types of conflicts are identified below.

Structure Conflicts

Usually these occur because of something beyond the control of the parties. These are now very common in Africa, especially among married

couples where a spouse has migrated to work in Europe leaving the partner behind. Where a married couple work in different countries they consequently have less physical contact. This situation often attracts tension and ultimately conflict.

Values Conflicts

From the name itself we can tell that this conflict arises from disagreement on fundamental values. For instance, some people may value the accomplishment of tasks while others may place more value on relationships. If these two people work together the task-oriented person may feel that the relational based individual wastes time.

Resources Conflicts

This type of conflict occurs when parties quarrel or fight over something they both want but where limited resources do not allow them to satisfy both their needs. A common and classic illustration is when folk fight over money or ministry resources.

Ego Conflicts

This conflict occurs when folk are fighting over or eyeing a position or competing as to who is better than the other at something. The focus is always on 'me' and 'I am the best here' attitude and so deserve to be in charge.

Personal History Conflicts

These are conflicts that happen because issues are not dealt with as they arise. In order to play it safe the parties concerned may ignore the conflict or the conflict may not be dealt with thoroughly. This pattern may become the norm, but it cannot be sustained as sooner or later emotions may erupt leading to a conflict.

Personality Conflicts

This type of conflict usually occurs where there are two people who have totally different personalities and find each other difficult to get along with. The incompatibilities between these two personalities can lead to conflict, especially if the people concerned work together.

Conflicts over Facts

It is not uncommon to find people in conflict over the way they interpret the facts of a situation. For instance, people may enter a conflict over circumstances that led to an unfortunate event. I recall an incident where a conflict between my fellow church leader and me occurred. We had agreed in our meeting that the young people would only be allowed to attend the Christmas Youth Camp if they managed to pay fifty percent of the fee. The balance would be covered by the Youth Camp Treasury. I was surprised to find that those who had paid less were also included on the list of those earmarked to attend. When I confronted my fellow leader, he told me that the agreement had been to allow at least fifty percent of the young people to attend the camp.

A Biblical View of the Source of Conflict

Whatever is the source of conflict it really all boils down to one thing – the motivation. Why do we do what we do? Why do I want this thing? Why am I saying what I am saying? Why am I doing this thing this way and not the other way? Really the question is what is my motivation? What is really driving me? This may not be what I am telling others and want them to believe.

What causes fights and quarrels (conflicts) among you? This is the question James is answering. He states, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (Jam 4:1-3). James articulates clearly that conflict is the result of the desires that battle within our sinful hearts. It is easy for a person to lose focus when their security, identity and significance are threatened. In situations like these it is even very tempting to ignore God or to seek to justify wrong behavior misusing scriptures as the justification. At such times good desires can transform into sinful retaliation and to a failure to listen to and understand the other person. Indeed, most conflicts result from our sinfulness leading to casual misunderstandings, pride and an unwillingness to see things from the perspective of the other person and acknowledge our own responsibility.

The sinful nature is inclined to be in competition and in fights, but our Christian calling works against these actions. James goes on to say that we

lust (covet) after what we do not possess and this controls us. That which is not right becomes our passion and ultimate goal. This sets us on a trajectory of jealousy of others, and we covet what others have or are. This provokes us to fight them. Or we are moved towards God but then that motive is skewed, and our desires are misplaced and misdirected because we simply seek personal gratification and not God and his purposes. One of the best ways of dealing with conflict is to have a willingness and ability to remove the log from your own eye so you can see the splinter in another's.

Seek Christ, Not Selfishness

God's desires are contrary to our desires. Our desires, James refers to them as 'adultery' – mean we are cheating on God with the 'woman' of our wrong motives and wicked plans. Consequently, this makes us enemies of our loving, and Creator God whose plans for us are best, although we choose the path of futility because of our selfish inclination. We are prone to seek the world's wisdom and ways more that God's. In our contemporary world it has become popular to seek the world's wisdom. The world's wisdom is more appealing than the real God-centered wisdom. This is not different from the time James was writing (Jam 2:14-26; 3:13-18; 4:1-6). The wisdom of the world has no real benefits in this life or in the life that is to come.

From the teachings of James and other scriptures it is evident that our incapacity to deal with conflict is primarily a spiritual challenge because our ego takes over and we attack and blame others. Instead of our ego ruling over us we must let Christ and our worship of Him dominate us. The reality of life is that we will wrong others and others will wrong us. This is a fact which we cannot escape from. Conflict is as a result of our fallen nature. If, when facing conflict, we do not seek the will and honor of Christ then envy and evil desires are beckoning. We must always choose to express the love of God when in conflict. The precepts of 1 Corinthians 13 are a good guide because love really does create perfect peace. God has given us the resources that we need to battle conflict. We have the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has dominion over all and hence we can be empowered to overcome sin. You must avoid jumping to a conclusion that the problem is a personal attack, even if you suspect that it may be. Remember that Christ is the one who defines you and not the problem or issue causing the conflict. Christ is your defender, and He does the best job of it. Paul says:

> "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with

> everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:17-21).

You must see your role as a relationship builder no matter how the other person seeks to discredit you. This approach will save you a lot of stress and disappointment. Forgiveness is one of the most important hallmarks of a Christian. God has hugely and graciously forgiven us so much that our forgiving of those who wrong us is nothing compared with God's forgiveness of us. Conflict resolution cannot transpire without forgiveness. Forgiveness is key for sustenance of any relationship.

We must bear in mind that any conflict is an opportunity to learn and give honor and glory to Christ. Conflict should not lead to an end of a relationship. God is able to use the conflict to bring about good. We grow in our faith mainly through conflicts i.e. how we respond to conflict. Conflict may facilitate our growth in character, maturity, love, obedience, and trust.

Face Conflict

Conflict is uncomfortable and for many people it does not only affect them emotionally and psychologically but physically as well. People who are deeply troubled by conflict usually seek the easiest and most efficient trajectory to deal with it for the sake of their survival and sanity. However, the best way to deal with conflict is to face it headlong – deal with it and do not circumvent it. One of the recommended ways of addressing conflict is to focus more on relationships than on the issue (without minimizing the issue). In your conversation with the other person, you need to listen carefully and come to a solution which will put the other person at ease. It is only in the context of a calm situation that facts should be evaluated. Once this has been done the focus should be on rebuilding the relationship. If the relationship has not been regained the chances of the problem continuing are high. We must remember not to take the problem at face value. When we do this, we get overwhelmed. The secret is to view the big picture, bearing in mind that God is sovereign and is working out His purposes and plans even in the conflict before us.

It is true that most conflicts seem complicated and involve many people and much hurt, miscommunication and misunderstanding. This may be our perception but usually this is not the right perception. Believe it or

not, most conflicts have just a few uncomplicated dimensions which can be isolated and dealt with.

Facing conflict involves listening. And here I am referring to effective and active listening. Some people think that listening is waiting to talk. Listening could even be said to be the first step toward resolving conflict. Without listening no progress can be made toward reconciliation. As human beings we are designed to be heard or listened to. Every person has the right to be heard. Do whatever is appropriate in your culture that represents good and effective listening. Check for clarity when not clear. For example, you may say "You have said a lot, let me summarize what I have heard you say and please correct me where I might have misunderstood you." Listening will help you to seek understanding. It may be that you will not be able to resolve the issue as such but at least you will begin to understand each other. There may be situations where issues do not need to be resolved if the parties concerned can understand each other's context. For example, you may seek to understand why someone is hurt or feels differently from you.

Practical Ways of Dealing with Conflict

Some of my readers will be experiencing some kind of conflict in one form or another right now. For some they are at a loss as to how to deal with the conflict. They are confused and are possibly trying hard to avoid addressing the issue, hoping that somehow the conflict will disappear into thin air. The trouble is that conflicts do not just dissipate of and by themselves. They have to be addressed. Below are suggestions of what you need to bear in mind in addressing conflict.

1. Gather all the facts and write them down. Think over and reflect on them prayerfully. Seek the counsel of godly and mature Christians without betraying confidences.
   If you are playing a moderating role and feel that you are unable to handle it for whatever reason, let someone else do it.
2. Always put yourself in the shoes of the other party with humility and introspection so you can understand how you have each contributed to the conflict.
3. Approach the conversation with a positive attitude and be relaxed. It is important to affirm and respect the other party and let them know that you care and you are willing to listen. You may feel that they do not deserve it but your part is to show them love and care

without compromising the issue. Validate the other as significant and approach them in love.
4. Use humor sensitively and appropriately. Never use it as an attack – it will simply exasperate the conflict.
5. Listen carefully and attentively by identifying the hurts, interests, concerns, desires, needs, limitations, and fears of the other person. Do not speak for the other person but for yourself.
6. Allow the other party enough time to talk without interrupting and then check with them whether what you heard is what they actually meant for you to understand.
7. Different people experience different situations differently. Hence never compare your life and situation with others. For example, it would be unwise to say, "What I said was so insignificant that you should not have made a big deal out of it".
8. Consider how you can glorify God in the situation and built up the other person. It is important, therefore, that you are not self-focused but rather focused on the issue. Avoid focusing on the other person as well. That is to say avoid any condescending attitudes and disrespect of any kind.
9. If the conflict is multi-faceted stick to one issue at a time and do not allow other past conflicts to interrupt.
10. Be humble enough, open and willing to listen to all possible solutions.
11. If the conflict involves sin, then the sin must be confessed and dealt with.
12. Always bear this in mind: the end goal of conflict resolution is reconciliation through confession, love and forgiveness.

I found the article that appeared in Brother T. F. Tenney's book, Advice to Pastors and Other Saints' very helpful advice concerning how to deal with conflict in a healthy manner. Below is the article:

> **Keep the disagreement in perspective.** Don't reject the person because he or she has a different opinion. A variety of opinions are the spices of life.
>
> **Do not transfer the disagreement to other areas.** Do not generalize. A two-color piece of literature is more attractive to the world, not when we are monotonously uniform, but when we function as the body of Christ, where one is the eye, another the hand and another the foot. The world will be impressed by our agreement to cooperate and complement each other, not by all of us being the same, acting the same, or even speaking the same.

Do not question the motives of the person with whom you disagree. If you assume the right of questioning another's motive, remember you must permit him or her the same privilege.

Do not assume that personal differences are sinful. They are usually due to different cultural, intellectual, and doctrinal positions. Remember this, a person does not necessarily have to be in fellowship with you to be in fellowship with Christ. Some people do not think it's smoke unless it comes out of their stack.

Remember that compromise is not sinful as long as it does not involve moral or basic doctrines. The hand does not sin in compromising because it accepts the guidance of the eye. They just agree ... compromise ... their function.

Don't hesitate to say, "You may be right, and I may be wrong. I must do what I consider to be right, but I'll respect you for doing what you believe to be right."

Don't think disagreement is something new among Christians and especially Christian workers. Read Acts 15:39[19]

Reality of Conflict in Ministry

Mubita was very excited when he was informed that he had been engaged as a Regional Youth Director in one of the Christian Organizations. Something about working in a ministry was what he looked forward to all his youthful life as a Christian. Mubita had finally landed in the perfect workplace straight from Bible College. This is the place where he had done his internship for three months and he loved every bit of it. The people were nice and friendly and seemed to get along well. Mubita had prayed and fasted for this job. This was a prayer answered. He believed that between prayers, devotions, and encouraging sticky notes, this organization was the best place to experience little or no conflict at all – after all during his time of internship he never witnessed any form or shape of conflict. It wasn't not long after being engaged that Mubita experienced his first conflict slap him out of his lovely heaven-on-earth sentiment of ministry.

Christian Organizations and Church present a unique environment. How? It is because it is part business, part family, with hazy lines of community and co-workers. For example, the same leader who is your line manager is in the Church home group for which you are responsible.

[19] Author Unknown. "When Brethren Disagree". Source: https://www.preachit.org/newsletters/articlefull/61 [last accessed 18.01.2019].

Somebody whom you lead in your home group is the fellow who appraises you. Such hazy boundaries mean you have an even higher calling to understand and handle conflict within the organization. As someone who has been a slow learner, I would like to suggest some tools I have found helpful when dealing with conflict in an organization or church.

Tool number 1: Recognize the Spiritual Reality

The Bible is clear that our fight is not against flesh and blood emissaries. Ours is a spiritual battle (Eph 6: 12). Indeed, when we wrestle with disunity, discord, and disagreements, it sure feels like a flesh and blood battle. However, Scripture is quick to remind us about this spiritual reality. The devil's ultimate aim is to "steal and kill and destroy" (Jn 10:10). Satan will try to destroy relationships in ministries. Therefore, it is vital that Christians be vigilant in guarding their unity and the peace between them. A realization that there are satanic forces at work which desire to harm God's work and workers when we face discord will help us to seek peace, tolerance and forgiveness even when we feel like giving up.

Tool number 2: Self Knowledge

In the uniqueness of our character and personality we see the manifold wisdom of God in his creation of humanity. We are all wired differently. No two individuals are the same even if they have had the same background and upbringing. It is also true to say that each one of us has developed behavioral patterns or distinct ways of thinking, feeling and acting. When you learn to appreciate, understand and identify your and the others' behavioral styles, you then increase the opportunity of your personal effectiveness in a range of people situations and conflict. Naturally, people sense, conceptualize and respond to situations according to their basic behavioral styles. However, when we face struggles in ministry, we want to react as spiritual leaders, not as grouchy, sulking children. Our particular character or personality should not be used as an excuse for not handling conflicts in a way that edifies others and glorifies God. A growing knowledge of your own relational patterns can help you understand your growth areas and be aware of blind spots in the way you deal with conflict.

Tool Number 3: Learn to Suffer Loss and Reconcile

If you and I want to be honest we need to confess that often our true focal point in many conflicts is to get across our views and agenda only. We

desire to prove that we are right and that the final decision favors our expectations. When this becomes our "end goal" we lose sight of the fact that it is a much higher call to make the relationship between the people in conflict my number one priority than serve my own agenda. Sometimes the urgent desire to fix the problem may come at the cost of good relationships. This does not imply that we should shy away from addressing issues that must be spoken about simply because of our fears of damaging relationships. What it does mean is that I must honestly deal with conflict, as far as it depends on me, within the framework of a good relationship. There may be times that I may need to compromise on non-critical and ethical issues that do not go against the teaching of the scriptures.

Conflict is not always a sign of a poorly functioning team and something we should view as to be avoided at all costs. I have learnt that much of the best growth in ministry, in my personal life, and in my relationships has happened after the painful pruning of conflict. When we are confronted with conflict we are confronted equally with a choice – to engage with it so we can learn and grow from it or circumvent it and withdraw and miss the opportunity to grow.

Conflict consultant Tim Dyer of Johnmark Ministries suggests four major ways of dealing with conflict in the church.

1. *Creating space or creating a ceasefire*: "This is helping churches to agree on what kind of process will help them deal with the conflict. The second part ('the ceasefire') is helping people to forgive one another for the small offences that have occurred that caused them to be in broken relationships with each other. You can't fix a conflict over an issue when you're got broken relationships."
2. *Conflict mapping*: Trying to understand all of the causes of a conflict. "There is a simple answer to every conflict, and it's wrong," says Dyer wryly. "One of the things that happens in conflict is that people will brush aside all of the things that don't quite make sense to them, and they'll settle on a position, and their position is normally simple and it's normally personal. One of the things we have to do is help people put aside their simplistic solutions and put aside their personalized solutions and step back and find out all the things that contribute to this conflict. You know, what's the church history, what are our different values, what are our different experiences, what are our different needs? And let's get all of those out on the table and have a good hard look at all the factors that contribute to a conflict. And you have to keep people in a trusting environment in order to do that."
3. *Coming up with criteria for 'success':* "At this point we need to agree together on what the criteria would be for a useful solution to this conflict.

Before we actually work out what the solution is, we have to work out how we are going to then reach that solution together, and what kind of indicators might there be that we can all agree on before we get to the solution as to what a good solution will be."

4. *Decision-making mechanism*: "Now you need to use an appropriate, organizational decision-making process to reach the right decision. So, in some churches, that's a vote, or maybe the elders make the decision, or in other churches it might be the senior pastor who makes that decision. And then, however that decision has been made, it needs to be made carefully and those people who are affected by the decision need to be cared for as a result."[20]

Li Ai Gamble, State Director at Peacewise and Dyer identify the most common mistakes Christians make in conflict by stating:

> "A common mistake is to try and fix the conflict without fixing the relationships first," says Dyer. "So, an important rule is always work on healing relationships before you try to heal the actual issue that is there. [...] A second mistake is simply believing that if we sit down in a circle and all have our say, we can work it out. Sometimes informal meetings can be very painful and very hurtful for people if they're not well facilitated. And that's a failure to appreciate sometimes the way power works and the importance of a good, healthy process. Many Christians don't appreciate the need for clear, well-designed processes for dealing with conflict. Process is your best friend when it comes to conflict."[21]

Gamble says the problem starts much earlier, when Christians refuse to give up their rights, desires or preferences in the name of unity. "The mistake people make in trying to resolve conflict, is that they try to still get what they want. Often in Christian circles, it's trying to get what we want in a 'nice' way."

Peacewise promotes four 'peacemaking principles' designed to make sure people take a God-honoring approach to conflict. Glorifying God is the first of these principles, which are known as the 4 G's:

- Glorify God
- Get the log out of your own eye

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[20] Tim Dyer, "How to deal well with conflict in the church (and not pretend it doesn't exist)". Source: http://www.biblesociety.org.au/news/conflict-church#sthash.wig5WnfF.dpuf [last accessed 05.08.2025].

[21] Tim Dyer, "How to deal well with conflict in the church (and not pretend it doesn't exist)".

- Gently restore
- Go and be reconciled

"Whether you're the offendee or the offender," says Gamble, "the question you need to ask once you're in that conflict, is what would glorify God in this situation? How can I respond, now that I'm in it, in a way that will please and honor God in this situation?" (1Cor 10:31). Asking these questions requires a perspective shift, she says. "It's about seeing conflict as an opportunity for God to teach you something, serve other people and glorify Him." The second principle, often the key to restoring relationship, is 'getting the log out of your own eye'. "The common issue that arises when Christians try to resolve conflict is failing to recognize our own heart, the contribution we've made to that conflict. We are blind to it" (Mt 7:5).[22]

Taking Responsibility

"Getting the log out of your own eye" means taking responsibility in a conflict. One of the most common reactions when faced with conflict is to attack others in order to cover our sins and faults. We do this because it will take the attention off us and place it on the other. It is human nature to see faults in others. Often, ironically, the very faults we see in others are those we have too. It is important to take a good look at ourselves, our faults and the things we need to improve on and dwell there. However, a responsible and mature leader will not go around defending himself or herself all the time. They are aware that their responsibility is to grow in character (becoming more like Jesus) and not finding faults in others. Insecure people are more prone to broadcast their 'innocence' all the time – solicited or unsolicited. Secure leaders know and acknowledge that while there is need to explain to deserving parties the circumstances leading to the conflict, they are also humble and quick enough to acknowledge that they may have had a part to play in bringing about the conflict. They take this approach because they realize that they are not perfect. If we are reluctant to see the faults in ourselves and be in the process of resolving them, then we have no right to help others by critiquing them. We are deluding ourselves and lying to God and others if we think that we have no faults. Such an attitude incapacitates us from effectively resolving whatever conflict may be occurring. Humble leaders who are used by God accept responsibility for the part they have played in the conflict and accept correction.

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[22] Tim Dyer, "How to deal well with conflict in the church (and not pretend it doesn't exist)".

Confession and Repentance

When the Holy Spirit has convicted us of the part we have played in the conflict, we must be quick and willing to confess and repent. Confession is good for our souls as it helps us to develop Christian character. The main purpose of confession is to glorify our God, heal hurts and resolve the conflict. If we ignore the conviction of the Holy Spirit we will injure both our fellowship with God and others. This will certainly cost us in the loss of abiding peace in Christ and incapacitate our effectiveness in our service for the Lord. Our Christian testimony becomes compromised. True repentance manifests itself in healthy relationships with God and people. We begin to manifest the fruit if the Holy Spirit.

Lack of repentance feeds on the waywardness of our sinful nature. However, repentance is not just when we are remorseful and sorry for our sins and seek to turn around to God. Repentance is the changing of all we are and do i.e. our values, our goals, aspirations and behavior – and turn to God and seek to walk in His ways. Repentance is about a changed life – a life lived with and for God.

Taking Initiative in Conflict Resolution Involving Others

> "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin (fault), you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load" (Gal 6:1-5) [parenthesis mine].

I guess one of the difficulties most of us face is when to 'interfere' or 'intrude' when we have become aware of a conflict that does not involve us but where we see the potential for this conflict to harm not only the parties concerned but other people around them. Most of us would rather not get involved as 'it is none of our business'. However, we must with humility, wisdom and prayer consider how we could possibly help resolve the conflict since we are members of the same Body of Christ.

As members of the Body of Christ we are to take seriously the scripture admonishing us to be responsible for each other in love and care. The Church is positioned to be a peacemaker and help in the restoration process of not just Christ followers but of all humankind. It is little wonder that in many countries experiencing political conflict the

church has either been called upon or has taken the initiative to help resolve the impasse.

There are churches and ministries that are riddled with conflict and people's frustration levels are high because their fellow Christians have acted in very ungodly ways. Sometimes these ungodly patterns of behavior are caused by all types of fear or by personality clashes. At other times people are found to have selfish hidden agendas and motives. When we seek to help, or are invited to arbitrate, our own motives must be the rescue of God's people from strife to the restoration of relationships and fellowship. We are to come alongside them with comfort and help. We are not there to act as judges and bring about conviction. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Ours is to pray with them and admonish them from the scriptures of the need to resolve the conflict in a way that honors God as well as restores and strengthens the relationship between those in conflict. We must have the best interests of the conflicting parties at heart. We must by all means avoid developing a 'savior' mentality so we can look good. The main focus is in humbly seeking to reconcile the parties and bring glory to God. It is, therefore, important that the people arbitrating are mature Christians who will seek to understand the situation, the people involved and who know themselves.

Agree to Disagree with Unity

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Rom 12:17-18) It would be very naïve to think that every conflict would end up with a common agreement. We noticed in the case of Paul and Barnabas that they had a sharp argument such that they 'agreed' to disagree and part company. If such spiritual 'heavy weights' could take this trajectory what more can be required of the majority of us? Paul's epistles mainly revolve around the various conflicts in the churches to whom he was writing. These conflicts included the role of women, spiritual gifts, leadership issues, and many others. It is heartening to notice that Paul's admonishing centered on surrendering to the Lord and not to the flesh. We must allow ourselves to be taught by the scriptures and surrender to the Lordship of Christ and not ourselves. This means that we are to express our oneness in Christ Jesus by expressing love and acceptance of others because Christ accepts and loves them. Of course, this does not include heretics who deny the deity of Christ and the authority of the Word of God.

Often our church or ministry conflicts have little to do with fundamental or even with major doctrines of the Bible and the Christian faith.

Unfortunately, they often arise from minor doctrines and practices. Be it in a church or organization, the majority of the conflicts are caused more by personality differences, finances, abuse of authority, governance and leadership inadequacies than anything else. These should not be causes for not cooperating, networking and not having fellowship.

Preventing Conflicts

I was wondering whether this subheading should have read minimizing conflicts since conflicts cannot be prevented completely. However, the point being stressed here is what process should be in place and what kind of behavior patterns can contribute toward lessening conflicts. A conflict resolution process or grievance policy needs to be in place, and all parties must be familiar with its content. Such a document empowers people to deal with conflict, especially since most people do not like to confront conflict because they are fearful it will blow up in their face. There is also the fear of losing the relationship and the fear of being misunderstood in their motives. They also fear hurting the feelings of others. Having a policy to deal with conflict and learning to control conflict is a key aspect of leadership and of a healthy organization.

Intentionally creating an atmosphere that fosters encouragement and spiritual growth in an organization or church is yet another key element in preventing conflict. This may mean that there is open and free communication among the team. Each team member should be free to approach each other and share their feelings and concerns without any reprisal. This atmosphere can only be created if there is a deep appreciation and acceptance of each other's failures and weaknesses because being open about these will encourage others to know that they are not alone in their struggles. However, showing vulnerability can be delicate because others may exploit it as a weakness. It is important that the team avoids this as much as possible. Instead, the team must pray together and communicate attitudes of love and care for each other, for example, by publicly and privately acknowledging each other's strong points. Team members must be comfortable to express themselves in a clear, healthy manner so that confrontation is accepted and expected.

The reality is that there are a lot of people who are unreasonable – including Christians. Sometimes one may wonder as to whether such people are saved. But then remember that humankind is fallen. There are those Christians who mature slowly, and their lives are somewhat carnal. They always want their own way or the highway. However, we must not let such bad people get us down or cause us to compromise biblical principles or

even our character. We should not let others make our Christian lives bitter. Instead, we need to pray for them and ask for wisdom from God and seek the counsel of other mature Christians as to how we could deal with such people. It is true that sometimes you may not have the energy to continue to resolve the conflict. In moments like these you would need to shift the focus off yourself and unto the Lord Jesus Christ. When you do this the bitterness and resentment you might have will not make you spiritually and emotionally toxic. God has His own unique ways of bringing about reconciliation in his time. It could be that God will use your character to speak to the other eventually because no attempt at reconciliation is ever wasted. It could be that God has brought such difficult people into our lives to grow and mature us in our faith.

Conclusion

Life happens. It is filled with conflicts – minor and major ones. These conflicts can be very frustrating experiences but can also be a source of growth and maturity depending on how we respond to them. We must be ready and willing to deal with conflict in a healthy way and not hide ourselves from it. We must not be engrossed in our anger but must be willing to admit our mistakes and sins if we expect others to do the same. We must be guided by the scriptures and not our own wills. We need to learn how to deal with conflict in a Biblical and mature manner. In this way we will listen and be objective.

A mature leader must have the thick skin and tenacity to listen to self-criticism without it affecting his or her self-esteem. Such a person will respond to criticism with gentleness and will never respond to anger with anger or power with more power. We must be willing and able to get above the conflict without strong emotions or premeditated non-God honoring reaction. We should facilitate an atmosphere of trust and encouragement. We should by all means avoid following our natural tendencies to get even. We must always remember that as Christ followers we will end up together in Heaven, hence we should endeavor to get along. If we have our antennas up for conflict detection at its earliest, it will prevent eruptions later.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you feel when you are involved in an altercation? Why do you feel that way?

2. Can you recall when you were in a conflict and how you handled the conflict? In retrospect how would have handled it differently, if at all?
3. If you were called upon to arbitrate between conflicted parties what sequential, logical steps would you take? What scriptures would refer to?

Memory Verse

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God" (Jam 4:1-2).

Chapter 7: Individual Spiritual Deficiency

"Defeat should never be a source of discouragement but rather a fresh stimulus." (Robert South)

The lyrics of the song "Slow Fade" written by Mark Hall and performed by is a Christian rock band Casting Crowns and released in 2007 are worth paying attention to:

Be careful little eyes what you see
It's the second glance that ties your hands
As darkness pulls the strings
Be careful little feet where you go
For it's the little feet behind you that are sure to follow

It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white are turned to gray
And thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid'
When you give yourself away
People never crumble in a day
It's a slow fade, it's a slow fade

Be careful little ears what you hear
When flattering leads to compromises, the end is always near
Be careful little lips what you say
For empty words and promises leave broken hearts astray

It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white are turned to gray
And thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid
When you give yourself away
People never crumble in a day
It's a slow fade, it's a slow fade

The journey from your mind to your hands
Is shorter than you're thinking
Be careful if you think you stand
You just might be sinking

It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white are turned to gray

And thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid
When you give yourself away

People never crumble in a day
Daddies never crumble in a day
Families never crumble in a day

Oh, be careful little eyes what you see
Oh, be careful little eyes what you see
For the Father up above is looking down in love
Oh, be careful little eyes what you see

A few years ago, I was invited to attend a Businessmen's Luncheon (I have no business acumen). Among the many things that caught my attention was the guest speaker's words (a very successful businessman). He clearly stated something along the lines of, "... colleagues, in a business success or failure doesn't occur overnight while it may appear sudden and stunning, and failure overdramatic there is always something that leads to it, a trajectory pursued". Similarly, backsliding doesn't happen overnight; it's a process.

I once heard a story of a man who took a walk in an unfamiliar forest and disregarded the warnings that he was given by one of the communities in the area. Apparently, he had trod a path toward the cliff edge and fell off. This stranger would have been saved from this disastrous fall had he heeded the warning and been more aware and cautious of his surroundings. Likewise, in backsliding there are tell-tale signs which the individual could have ignored or failed to see, and which others could have made them aware of but for reasons best known to this individual failed to take heed. Sometimes this happens because the individual had self confidence in their own assessment of the situation or stood to 'benefit' from the situation. Often it is due to spiritual pride that we chose not to listen or be corrected.

Backsliding

The word "backslide" does not appear in the New Testament, but it is an occurrence to which every believer has the potential to be in. However, this word appears in several places in the Old Testament such as (Jer 14:7 NKJV) where Israel, confessed, "Our backslidings are many, we have sinned against you". In Hosea 11:7 God Himself testified concerning Israel: "My people are bent on backsliding from me."

The Lord's people in every age and generation are unfortunately prone to spiritual decline. We all carry in us the DNA for backsliding. The reason

God's people backslide is the presence of sin, the flesh, or the "old man" in our lives and indeed Satan. When we become believers, we're regenerated and are saved from the penalty and power of sin, but not from the presence of sin. We still live in a world of sin where the prince of this world reigns and attacks God's people.

Scripture says, "The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways" (Pr 14:14). Backsliding is a very unhappy state manifested in a decline in spirituality and a dying affection for the Lord. A person loses interest in the things of the Lord and becomes careless in the use of grace and simply goes through the routine of Christian activities. Such a one falls in love with the worthless things of the world and befriends it and is controlled by the indwelling sin. It is important to know the causes of backsliding so we can keep away from them. At the center of backsliding is sin. One must be careful not to neglect prayer and reading of the Word and continuously put to death the works of the flesh as well as guarding the heart and not lose the eternal perspective and be lured by the things of the world. One must guard against sheer spiritual laziness as terrible consequences result when a Christian chooses to wander away from Jesus Christ and the pathway of life.

Unhelpful Response to Backsliders

Admittedly, all Christians are potential backsliders. We stand simply by the grace of God. The negative attitude that fellow Christians have toward those who shipwreck their faith is certainly one of the ugly sides of ministry. Such responses as, "I saw it coming. I knew it was just a matter of time before this would come out in the open, I just didn't want to point it out", or "How long did he think he could conceal that?" Backsliders have become subjects of many a prayer meeting where gossip and not genuine concern for the backslider is the motivation.

The Pain of Backsliding

Bishop Sakala was the founder and president of a growing ministry. Within a period of 10 years, he had planted more than 30 churches all across his country and in four neighboring countries with a members' hip of almost 3,000. Sakala was visionary, charismatic and gifted leader and Bible teacher. He was well respected among his congregants and other Christian leaders. His firm and popularity went beyond his country as he was a well sought after speaker internationally. When Sakala visited his churches, he

was afforded near loyalty hospitality. He had a team of security around him all the time. An outsider would have thought he was almost worshipped.

Bishop Sakala made himself accountable only to himself although he claimed to be accountable to his leadership team and God. There are danger signals that flashed which at the time Sakala failed to recognize and instead chose to ignore because of a spiritual pride that he convinced himself that they could be a danger for others but not for me. He thought he could handle it. Sakala developed a false confidence that caused him like Samson to play with fire. People on his leadership team knew too well that he was not in any way submissive to them, but they would not dare to admit for fear of loss of their positions and some financial benefits. The beloved bishop that people know was different from the real bishop. The bishop was in the habit of taking sexual of his female members. He also kept a tight control of the finances. It wasn't until one of the young ladies claimed to have been impregnated by the bishop that a few other ladies revealed that they had been sexually abused by the bishop. `The bishop initially resisted to step down but there was so much pressure from various interested groups that consequently he was put on discipline to the amazement of his members and the public. how the mighty had fallen.

The loss of his status and authority resulted into Sakala been ridiculed and mocked both in the church and the community. One third of his congregants moved away from his church. The offering and tithes plummeted badly. In fact, some of his leaders mentioned that their suspicions were vindicated. Sakala felt ostracized and banished by his own leaders. Sakala felt so isolated that many voices began to speak to him as to whether it was worthy to serve the Lord. He as a matter of fact contemplated committing suicide at one point. The loss of attention, respect, authority and the razzmatazz welcome he would receive from his members was beyond bearing. Sakala felt unappreciated and unloved by those who surrounded him.

Sakala joined the ranks of many who when they backslide feel lonely and uncared for. This is part of the ugly side of ministry. Instead of loved ones being there for the backslider they often isolate themselves from such. For some it's not because they do not have anything to minister to the backslider, it is just that they are at a loss as to what to say to them; more so if the backslider was their senior leader. For others they almost seem to almost rejoice especially if the backslider was proud and stubborn and refused to receive rebuke and correction. There are those who see this as an opportunity to replace the backslidden leader. While expressing their sympathy for the fallen believer their hearts are somewhat expectant of the opportunity to ascend to leadership. The loss of Christian testimony

for the backslider is no mean loss but most importantly the name of the Lord is brought into disrepute. The backslider is aware of these, and it is at such moments that they need the encouragement most.

The story of Sakala doesn't end here. In his backslidden state most of his close associates and fellow ministry leaders abandoned him. He was so lonely and very hurt that he joined Islam and started attending a local mosque. This action incensed many Christian leaders and draw further away from Sakala. They considered him an apostate. Many even doubted whether he had truly believed in the Lord as his Savior and Lord. One day on his way from the mosque Sakala pumped into his former school met that he had led the Scripture Union with. After exchanging the usual greetings with Chanda asked Sakala how he was doing as a Christian. To Chanda's surprise Sakala broke down and wept like a baby as he leaned on Chanda's shoulder. "You are the first person to ask me this question since my being put out of fellowship. No one has cared for me. My fellow leaders have deserted me, and my wife has left me too". I needed to be somewhere with people who would love me the way I am". Sakala continued, "I am not doing well in my walk with the Lord. I am lonely and hurting. It is for this reason that I started attending the local Mosque, against my conscience and Christina belief". To cut the long story short – this marked the process of restoration for Sakala. He now attends church at another fellowship and has been surrounded by people who love him. Sakala has made public confession for his sin and asked for forgiveness but has certainly paid dearly (in human terms). He is seeking restoration and reconciliation with his wife.

Causes of Backsliding

There are many causes of backsliding as they are backsliders, and we do not have space here to outline them all. A few common ones will be discussed. Backsliding is a process and is not easily discerned by on lookers, but the culprit would be aware of the process although some will even live in denial of the degrading spiritual state until it is too late. Below are suggested common causes:

1. Insignificant Compromises

These are small but important unhelpful issues or activities that seem not to matter a lot as far as our spiritual lives are concerned. When we neglect Time Alone with God (TAG), church attendance and simply get along with

the Christian life and ministry activities then it's only a matter of time before we spiritually begin to erode away. We begin to give in to "little sins". The wise man Solomon warns us, "Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom" (Sg 2:15). A drop of water from the tap falling every few seconds will eventually empty your water tank if left unattended to for a long time. Similarly, "little sins" have a habit to drain us spiritually eventually.

2. Un-confessed sin or bad habits

We are prone to wonder and sin. However, when we sin, we must be as sensitive to sin as the eye is to a foreign body. Many of us struggle with certain sins or habits that if we do not keep a short account with God and confess our sins we are in clear and present danger of shipwrecking our faith. Failure to confess sin leads to the normalization of the same and eventually one reaches a point where the conscience becomes seared toward that particular sin. Sometimes it may not necessarily be an un-confessed sin that may weaken our faith but a bad habit that is an impediment to our faith. Paul refers to such when he writes, "Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial". "Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything" (1Cor 6:12).

3. Self-pity caused by failure

Failure of one sort or the other at one or several times is not an exception for each follower of Christ. How we respond when we fail the Lord matters a lot. Satan rejoices when we fail God. He is known as "the accuser of the brethren" in Rev 12:10. Satan is very good at ensuring that we are discouraged and desires us to give up when we sin. He whispers to us that we are better of giving up as we will never live a victorious life. However, God promises forgiveness and restoration when we confess, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1Jn 1:9-10). Scripture also encourages us, "a just man falls seven times, and rises up again" (Pr 24:16).

4. Being casual in our Christian walk

Is it interesting how many of us embark on the Christian pilgrimage with much zeal and enthusiasm and years later we tend to become so casual and careless. I have often heard people recall how they used to witness for Christ when they first came to faith; how they read their Bibles and prayed.

Now they have become a shadow of themselves. Honestly, we ought to be ashamed if this defines you and me. A Christian who keeps busy with God-given responsibilities and walking closer with God daily will be less likely to give place to Satan in his life (Eph 4:27,28). We cannot afford to be careless and idle. Idleness becomes the Devil's workshop. King David's time of backsliding commenced when he became so casual in his life. He was supposed to be at war but instead lingered in his palace. He fell into lust and immorality with Bathsheba. Do not become too familiar with God and the things of God for you risk taking God and your Christian life for granted. You must always be on guard. "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1Cor 10:12-13).

It is not uncommon that in our being casual we end up becoming friends with the world. James does not mince his words but clearly states that any friendship with the world makes the Christian the enemy of God (James 4:4). We cannot afford to sit on the fence – enjoy the things of the world and those of the Lord as well. As a matter of fact, those who try to ride the fence are actually in a backslidden state already. The challenging words of Joshua to the nation of Israel still echo today, "... But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." (Jos 24:15). We can't afford to be spiritually lukewarm as this is nauseating to God. To such the Almighty says, "So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Rev 3:16).

5. Spiritual Pride and Arrogance

Scripture admonishes, "A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy" (Pr 29:1) and "The proud and arrogant man – 'Mocker' is his name; he behaves with overweening pride" (Pr 21:24) also, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Pr 16:18). Pride was caused the fall of Lucifer. I know of many leaders who have refused rebuke and correction from those that they lead or from fellow leaders. They consider themselves to spiritual and mature to be corrected. This more so for those who love clerical titles and revel in the office they hold. Such leaders insist on being addressed by their titles and claim their entitlements. The example of Sakala above is a case in point. True spirituality receives correction, rebuke and admonishment from others. I am aware that sometimes this correction may not be done in a loving spirit. However, it must not be ignored. The question

should be, "Is what is being said about me correct?" and not, "Is it fair that people should say such to me?" The majority of people who speak into our lives is because they love and care for us.

6. Do not fight temptation but flee from it.

A story is told of as very rich man seeking to engage a chauffeur. Many experienced drivers responded to his advert. Each of the respondents was asked this question, "How far would drive near the cliff without tipping over?" There were many interesting others. Among them were, "As close as one ten feet", the other, "As close as five feet", another responded, "I am so experienced I could get so close to the cliff within two inches". One man however, said, "I would keep way from the cliff as a far as possible". The man hired this man. Similarly, we are told to "flee temptation" (1Tim 6:11, 2Tim 2:22).

We fight the good fight of faith but not fight temptation because the more you fight temptation, the more you give into temptation. Here is a simple exercise to prove my point. Try not to think about a particular number, say 5, for the next minute. You will find out that every time you deliberately reason not to think of the number 5, you are ironically and thinking of it repeatedly. Similarly, whatever we fight against, we are overcome by that very thing we are fighting against. While we are to flee from temptation, we must fight evil with the truth because we can only overcome with the truth (Jn 8:22). The Apostle Paul beautifully illustrates, "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good ... Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse ... Do not repay anyone evil for evil ... Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:9-21). Back to our example of 5; 6 multiply by 6 and then subtract 32 and add 1. This trajectory of doing mathematics made you avoid thinking about the number 5. The point here is that if we are led and controlled by the Holy Spirit we will not be dominated by "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does ..." (1Jn 2:16).

Once Backslidden –Restoration

Maurice Basalli[23] outlines seven steps I think are involved in restoration.

When one backslides, they must not allow failure to be fatal. When we fail, as everyone does from time to time, we may be tempted to quit, as we

[23] Maurice Basalli, "Backsliding and Restoration". Source: https://tafj.org/2011/02/02/backsliding-and-restoration/ posted on February 2, 2011 [last accessed 25.07.2025].

saw in the case of Sakala. This thought must be banished. We should not allow a setback to sideline us or make us question our call. When we fail there are many voices of discouragement that speak to us. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, will feast on our failure and seek to discourage us not only spiritually but psychologically, mentally and emotionally. When we fail God, we should use our failures as a school master to learn from them. We must ask ourselves what we have learnt about others and ourselves – strengths and weaknesses, our team, our strategy and ministry context. We serve a God of restoration, and the Bible is full of God demonstrating this to individuals as well as nations.

1. The agent of restoration is God. The believer has the ability to wander, but not to return. A straying sheep never finds its way back to the fold. The work of restoring backsliders from spiritual decay is God's, and all of grace: "The Lord is my shepherd ... He restores my soul" (Ps 23:1, 3). Only the One who says, "I am the Lord who heals you" (Ex 15:26), and declares, "I will heal their backsliding" (Hos 14:4) can restore souls.
   In the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin (Lk. 15), the shepherd went after the stray sheep, and the woman searched until she found the lost coin. Jacob was seriously backslidden in Padanaram. To restore him, the Lord appeared twice (Gen 31:3, 13) bidding him to return home. For a year, David refused to acknowledge his sins of adultery and murder. To restore him, Jehovah sent Nathan to show him his guilt (2Sam 11-12). Peter denied the Lord three times, but the Lord restored him (John 21). Jehovah was anxious to restore backsliding Israel: "Return to Me ... you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jr 3:1, 22).
2. The basis of restoration is altogether a matter of grace. At no point does God's amazing grace appear more conspicuous than in His attitude toward His wayward ones. Since grace is one of His perfections, He restores in a way that magnifies the riches of His grace. God performs all His works – creating, saving, providing, protecting, guiding or restoring – in a way worthy of Himself. It would be unlike Him to do anything else.
3. The call to restoration is a call to repentance. Our entire responsibility in restoration is crystallized in one crucial word – return. "If you will return, O Israel, return to Me" (Jr 4:1). "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jr 3:22). The unsaved need to "turn" to God for salvation; backsliders must "return" to God for restoration.

"O Israel, return to the Lord your God" (Hs 14:1). This means that the backslider must recognize that he has departed from the Lord, followed his heart's evil devices, and entered forbidden paths. It means that he must judge himself, taking sides with God against sin and self. It denotes that he must humble himself before God, confessing his unworthiness and seeking mercy. Finally, he must make a whole-hearted resolution to obey again.

4. *The standard of restoration is not a position, place or service – but God Himself.* It is God's prerogative to fix the standard, and He always brings the soul back to Himself: "Return, O Israel ... return to Me" (Jer 4:1). The return must be to Him, the standard of all restoration. He never lowers His standard. He is the criterion by which all conduct is measured.
5. *The means of restoration is repentance, which signifies a change of mind.* Christian repentance is the heart turning from sin to God. Sin is forsaking God; repentance is forsaking sin. Repentance says, "What have I to do anymore with idols?" (Hos 14:8). Though it is painful and humbling, it results in pleasant fruit. Heavenward, it glorifies God: "If you will not hear, and ... take it to heart, to give glory to My name ... I will send a curse upon you" (Mal 2:2). Manward, it brings heartfelt confession. The more we sorrow for sin, the more we rejoice in the Lord. Great is the transforming power of real repentance: "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation ... but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2Cor 7:10).
6. *The object of restoration is righteousness.* "He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness" (Ps 23:3). Restoration restores us to righteousness. We are saved by grace which reigns through, not at the expense of, righteousness (Rom 5:21). We are not restored so we may go and sin again – but that we may "go and sin no more" (Jn 8:11).
7. *The condition of restoration is confession or self-judgment.* Self-judgment is important for two reasons. First, it is the one condition of fellowship, forgiveness, and cleansing: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jn 1:9). Second, it saves us from chastisement: "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1Cor 11:31). The Father is waiting for self-judgment by His sinning child, but if there is none, the Father must chasten so that he "may not be condemned with the world." If self-judgment is neglected, God corrects His child.

True repentance requires conviction, contrition, and confession. It results in a true sense of sin, sincere sorrow for sin, strong loathing of sin, and future forsaking of sin. It is described in Scripture as "a broken and a contrite heart" (Ps 51:17), and "weeping bitterly" as Peter did after denying the Lord (Mt 26:75). It is described thus: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2Chr 7:14).

Some of the Consequences of Backsliding

God's Name at Stake

A Christian is God's ambassador here on earth. Regardless of the nature of the sin they commit God's name is compromised and put to shame. The name of God is more at state than that of the backslider. For example, when King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed, God through the prophet Nathan said, "But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt, the son born to you will die" (2Sam 12:14). Writings to the Romans the Apostle Paul rebukes the Jews for their backsliding and unbelief, "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you (Rom 2:24). While it is true that the fellowship of the backslider will be affected with God or that others will be stumbled, most importantly it is the shame we bring to the Lord's Holy name.

Damage to and Loss of Ministry

There are consequences to be suffered when a child of God backslides. For example, we have all witnessed or heard about scandals involving well know Tele-evangelists and the disastrous consequences. First of all, the evangelist's ministries are severely damaged or completely destroyed. Often we think that we can get away with sin, but Scriptures are clear:

> "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs" (Lk 12:2-3).

The Lord has continued to expose many spiritual leaders. He cautions us not to be cheated by the enemy that our sin can remain hidden. The severe and devastating consequences of backsliding must be considered by all

Christ followers and therefore must always be on guard. It is such a great honor and privilege to serve the Lord and yet a moment of pleasure and indulgence of the flesh could result in limitations of service. Satan's desire is to hinder the usefulness of every Christian. In 1Cor 9:25-27, the Apostle Paul lived in constant realization of this that he could disqualify himself from effective ministry by his own sin if he became careless with his life.

Our God is able to keep us from backsliding if we will humble ourselves and seek his presence as Jude 24 promises, "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy ..." and 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it".

Effect on Family

Backsliding can do great damage to our families. When someone falls into sin, especially sexual sin, the pain, shame and resentment this brings on the family is immeasurable. Not only is the Holy Spirit grieved through sin, but the family is grieved as well. The backslider loses fellowship with God and indeed with the family. While the backslider does not lose the relationship with God just as much as they cannot lose the relationship with the family, there is however, a chasm between God and the individual.

I have witnessed marriages been dissolved due to sexual immorality on the part of one of the spouses. And where there has been such a separation or divorce the children have been traumatized and suffered greatly. I have heard of cases where the couple has concealed sin involving a spouse due to loss of status, benefits, power and influence that would result if the sin was made public. This is self-deception and only erodes away one's spirituality and eats at the core of the marriage. It is not sustainable. Soon or later the ugly truth would be known.

Effect on Health

Sometimes the consequences go beyond the loss of ministry, wealthy, popularity, firm, marriage and loss of rewards in heaven, but they affect one's health. The psychological and emotional drain backsliding causes can be very unbearable. I know of two people that actually committed suicide as a result. The loss of health is more pronounced if the backslider is involved with drug addiction, alcoholism, and sex (AIDS and S.T.I) will result in physical impediment that hinder fruitful ministry to the Lord.

The God of Restoration

God's heart yearns for backsliders who are willing to return and repent. It is useless to blame family, someone else, society, or circumstances for the backsliding. We must take full responsibility for our sin – confess, repent, make restoration where necessary and seek restoration. However, restoration is not a simple matter of the backslider telling the Lord he is sorry and just going on from there. Someone has said that falling away from grace is like a geographical journey away from God so much so that the further a person goes from God the longer it may take to retrace those steps back to full restoration. It is no wonder that the Bible mentions that godly wisdom and maturity is required for those who help in the restoration process as recorded in Galatians 6:1 "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" and 2 Timothy 2:25 and 26, "Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will".

Sometimes as believers we can become discouraged and downright pessimistic over the possibility of backsliders being restored to a life of fruitful service again. We seem to forget the encouraging words of the Lord Jesus in telling of our Heavenly Father's eagerness to forgive his repentant prodigal children. The words: "his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Lk 15:20) reflect also the eagerness of our Heavenly Father to forgive and restore His repentant backsliders. "But with you there is forgiveness ...", cried out the patriarch David in Ps130:4). Isaiah equally says "[...] return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy [...] and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Ps 55:7). The Apostle John in 1 John 1:9 declares, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". These and hundreds more of scriptures assures us of God's willingness to forgive and restore.

I once heard about a true story of a Christian restored just before he died. His father was a godly man and had lived for the Lord in his generation. He had a son who was a baptized disciple who later became grossly discouraged as a result of some family tragedy and wandered away from the Lord. He was in Christ but not bearing fruit and enjoying the Christian life. This young man worked as a firefighter and was aware that his occupation often brought him face to face with death. Yet he would not seek to put things right with God as he daily risked being ushered into the divine presence with so many things un-reconciled with his Lord. It was not to be

his line of work that would prove to be a blessing in disguise but a cancer attack. His doctor and nurses did everything possible to help him, but they couldn't and eventually they sent him home to die. Many believers had visited him while in hospital and continued to when he was sent home. The young dying man responded to the prayers and encouragement of the caring Christians who daily visited and prayed with him. He gladly responded once again to the Lord of Christ and was assured that failure and folly could be forgiven. He asked for his late father's bible to be read to him. The bible was well worn, well read, well-marked book, a cherished heritage indeed. A few days after his restoration he lapsed into a comma and was called home. What a testimony this was to be at his funeral. The backslider, however, does not have to wait until, a calamity happens to them before they would consider rededicating their lives to the Lord. But sometimes the Lord, in his sovereignty, allows such to happen in order to bring his stubborn children back to himself. However, we do not have to wait until such a time that God is 'forced' to act in such a way that pain would bring us back to Himself.

Caring for Backsliders

Perhaps before we even talk about caring for backsliders, we should be looking at how we need to care for the fellow believers especially those who are slowing losing grip of their faith. God does not give up on his backsliding children. Much can be said about the nation of Israel. Scripture is punctuated by many of the Lord's people who fell from grace but were later restored and even mightily used of God. We have examples of King David who fell into adultery with Bathsheba, had her husband killed, then took her as his wife (2 Samuel 11). The King repented and acknowledged his sin and continued to serve in God's favor as Israel's king. David is considered by many to be Israel's greatest king, to this day. John Mark came under the pastoral care and mentorship of caring and restoring oversight of Barnabas and was greatly used of God. Paul confirmed the usefulness of John Mark, someone that he had almost written off earlier in his ministry. In his goodness the Lord granted him the privilege of writing the Gospel of Mark.

Lots can be recalled as regards Peter, the tempted and failing disciple of the Lord who betrayed his Master. He wept in repentance and was restored and amazingly the Holy Spirit used him to usher thousands into the Kingdom of God in a day. Of Peter the Lord said, "But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Lk 22:32). It is clear that the Lord desires for

his children to be vehicles of restoration for those falling from grace. The Apostle Paul was heavily burdened for Demas in his backslidden state such that he lamented, "[...] for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica" (2Tim 4:10). Unfortunately, the Holy Spirit did not reveal to us the end of Demas, but we can extrapolate that it was not good.

As Christians we are called upon to be 'our brother's or sister's keeper'. We are one body and if one part of the body suffers, we all are affected and if it rejoices, we do that together. We have therefore a responsibly not only to watch over our lives but also the lives of others and be aware of potential danger that would threaten our and their security and well-being. When we see the threat, we should be able to warn others and how it will, if unchecked, affect their spiritual health.

We must be on the lookout to discern patterns in our and others' behavior that indicate a drifting away from following Christ. We must always remind ourselves that the purpose of God for us is that we be 'conformed to the image of His dear Son'. It is therefore incumbent upon each Christian, especially leaders, to be aware of and need to counsel those who are sliding backward in this respect. In our quest to come to the 'spiritual aid' of others we may be accused of being overprotective and interfering. This is a service that we need to undertake prayerfully and sensitively and yet forthrightly. This is not easy at all, but it needs s to be done. If erring people have to be confronted, then this must be done lovingly but firmly. It is regrettable that our fear not to offend has hindered us from confronting and the person has further gone into sin or a bad habit, and it has been too late to address. The person would have become a spiritual casualty before we confront them. As brothers and sisters, we are to be spiritually jealousy for one another. Whilst we are not responsible for the people's sin, we do have a duty to sound a clear warning note. Pastoral care for one another is of vital importance and to be carried out effectively is largely dependent upon a good relationship between one another.

I am sure there are some known by the reader who have drifted away from the Lord and His things. What is your reaction? Does the state of their spirituality disturb you? Are you praying for them and assuring them of your prayers? Have you thought about visiting them or taking them out for meal? How about inviting them to your home? Maybe you should be phoning them or sending them a booklet or a little message from the Lord and seeking their restoration in the spirit of the eagerness of our forgiving God. It is not easy to minister to one whose faith has grown cold. This is a ministry for which we need direction, wisdom and compassion from God. We must always remember that there is a life at stake, a life that is being

wasted. Terrible consequences may result when a child of God chooses to wander away from Jesus Christ and the pathway of life.

Disciplining the Backslider

Years back when I was pastor I had to unfortunately confront and discipline some believers who had fallen into sin. I must confess that this was one of the most difficult activities to perform. It was a spiritual painful thing to do. It was an exercise that I had to do with tears and a heavy heart. Excommunicating or putting someone out of fellowship is like having part of your body dismembered. It is, however, necessary and biblical that this be done. It is very disturbing to note today how the church has become tolerate to sinful living in some of her members. People's privatized lives and the claim to human rights have not helped to restore holiness among the people of God. Sometimes leaders have had no courage to approach and address the erring individual for fear of offending the culprit. A similar thing took place in the problematic Corinthian church and Paul was incensed and wrote, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?" (1Cor 5:1-2). When a Christ follower lives in sin it is not just his or her testimony or that of the church or organization that is at stake, more importantly, it is the name of Holy God that is brought into dispute.

Administering Discipline

Church discipline should be administered with great discretion and love. It should not be too light or else it will not produce the suitable purpose, and neither should it be so excessive such that it will drive the offender to despair and away from the community of faith. In a situation where any of the two is the case Satan will gain an advantage and seek to destroy the spiritual life of the backslider.

The purpose of discipline is not to punish the offender so much as to do him or her good, and at the same time to preserve the Church's purity and the Lord's testimony. Church discipline should not be viewed as the final act in itself in dealing with the erring person. It should be associated with much prayer, encouragement and love for the offender. It has repentance leading to restoration in view. I have unfortunately witnessed cases where church discipline has been imposed with the effect of hindering repentance or render restoration impossible. This is especially common

where there has been personal differences and crashes. It is therefore important that discipline is not administered by one person but by the leadership. The discipline of persecution and intolerance only helps to advance the evil purposes of Satan. Restoration for a backslider must be genuine and carried out in love. He or she must not be restored to suspicion, coldness, and condescension; such a restoration only opens doors for possible backsliding again.

Confession and proved repentance on the part of the backslider is an assuring sign that the backslider may be ready to be considered for restoration. However, humanly speaking it is not always easy to prove that repentance has taken place other than the external indicators on the part of the offender. Often it is at the discretion of the leadership that the offender is brought back into fellowship. I believe, however, that if the powers that be are continuously taking keen interest in the life of the backslider it is easy to tell when the person should be restored. When the honour of the Church has been vindicated, and the backslider is genuinely contrite he or she must be restored.

Conclusion

The grace of God is such that he does not give up on any backslider. It's people who, unfortunately, give up on God. God somehow seems to specialize in using wounded people. Most people that God used seem to have had a spiritual mark of failure or backsliding. Think about Moses, the murderer, David the adulterer and murderer, Paul the murderer, Jonah the reluctant and backsliding messenger. The list is endless. The difference is that these people embraced the grace of God and were greatly used of God in spite of themselves. God has not changed. He is a God of second, third, fourth ... and hundred chances. This writer would not be writing if God were to deal with him according to his sinfulness. Where there is brokenness and a contrite spirit; confession; genuine repentance; restoration (if need be) and Godly sorrow, God is attracted to use such a life again. Dear backslidden brother or sister – do not give up on God because God will never give up on you. You may be knocked down but not knocked out. He who started the good work in you if faithful to bring it to completion.

Questions for Reflection

1. In your own words can you explain the meaning of Galatians 6:1-5?

2. In Revelation 2:4 we read these words, "... you have forsaken your first love ...", what is your understanding of these words? What could be the cause of forsaking your first love?
3. What biblical steps would you take to help and restore a backslider?

Memory Verse

"Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding" (Jer 3:22).

Chapter 8: Sex

Introduction

The small church in the village was faced with a dilemma. A sixteen-year-old choir member was sexually molested by the pastor. The abuse had been going on until she decided to open up to her auntie who had come visiting from the city. "Initially, the pastor was very good to me. He gave me gifts and often prayed for me when the two of us were together", revealed the girl. She went on to say, "Eventually, when praying for me he would touch me in places he shouldn't have been, but he reassured me that there was nothing wrong with that as she had spiritual authority over my body". "In recent times he asked me to do things to him and has done bad things to my body", the sixteen-year said with tears.

Her auntie took the matter to the church leaders and to her family, and the matter was discussed. The pastor was asked to pay two goats and five chickens to the girl's family. Not wanting to shame the pastor and the girl's family the matter was closed and the charges dropped. The pastor was transferred to another congregation and to this day that pastor continues to serve.

I know you might say, "What a very unscriptural way of dealing with such a serious matter?" I would say the same as well. How many of our leaders have gotten away with sex scandals. We fear that such gifted and charismatic leaders are going to look bad. The point is they are bad, and they should look bad. They have demonized the victims and are destroying the Church and bringing in dispute the name of the Lord God. Increasing sex scandals in both the Roman Catholic Church and especially the Evangelical church has given birth to the "#Metoo" era – i.e. people that have been sexually molested in the past are coping out; naming and shaming the perpetrators. However, should the victims wait until it's too late?

Similarly, when one fails sexually, they must be quick to confess and repent and possibly seek counsel. Failure to do may result in one becoming desensitized to their sin. Satan is very good at wanting us to keep our 'evil little practices' between ourselves and him. The 'evil little practices' (though not little in the sight of God) have a tendency to grow and when they mature, they give birth to destruction to the leader and the ministry.

Sex Scandals

The media and tabloids report sex scandals almost on a daily basis. These scandals do not just involve powerful business moguls and politicians but prominent Christian leaders both in the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches, as already indicated above. Unfortunately, Christian history is riddled with records of men and women who have had their faith shipwrecked as a result of sex allegations.

Sex and power are so often interlinked. Followers like associating themselves with those with power over them for it positions them in a place of favors. Consequently, and more often than not, the unguarded and undiscerning followers make themselves vulnerable to all types of abuse by the leader, including sex abuse. Some leaders who eventually reach positions of power have strong ambitions in that direction and indeed develop a certain spiritual recklessness. The position of power itself makes these leaders arrogant, narcissistic, egocentric, oversexed, paranoid, despotic, and still crave for more power. Some male leaders generally have a keen eye for female beauty and attractiveness, and women generally are attracted to powerful, successful, famous, and wealthy Christian ministers. Leadership brings with it serious built-in hazards, moral landmines that are capable of destroying the leader, his family and church if one is not on guard.

Sex is more than just skin and nerve endings. For the lustful leader sex is too often about power and dominance rather than simple enjoyment. All leaders (especially males) face sexual temptation from time to time, and their position of power makes them very susceptible to such. I remember reading the following on a card, "*Power, particularly the Christian strain, tends to infantilize. Success in Christian ministry frequently reduces fully grown adults to narcissistic babies. They lust for someone or something and they want to get it. They manipulate and control. Their needs are uninhibited. For them gratification must be instant. Unfortunately, many a Christian leader though gifted and has charisma is just an overgrown man-baby.*" People in power almost automatically expect other people to do their bidding. They view sex as just part of that game.

Conversational pornography or outright pornography has many of the Christians trapped into it. Sexual temptation is so volatile such that once one indulgences himself in itself control becomes very difficult. Sexual temptation has no respect for persons, theological labels, and leadership positions. Our postmodern culture condones more aggressive sexual behavior. It is not unusual for example to witness women aggressively pursuing those in leadership. Sometimes what starts of as a spiritual matter

between the leader and the follower ends up in an affair. Male leaders need to be careful when dealing with female counselees because it is easy for the counselees love for God to be transferred into romantic feelings for the male counselor.

Below are two really life examples of recent cases involving two Christian leaders who unfortunately were overcome by sexual passions and succumbed. One involved a named American Christian leader and the other involves a young and upcoming African Christian leader. I asked my African friend to write his own testimony but requested that I do not use his name.

Really Life Example One

Tullian Tchividjian Preaches on God's Faithfulness after Sex Scandal: "I Broke My Own Life"

Tullian Tchividjian,[24] the grandson of famed evangelist Billy Graham, recently delivered a sermon reflecting on his "broken" journey over the last three years and the work of God in his life since he publicly "crashed and burned". In a Feb. 8 blog post,[25] Tchividjian shared footage of a sermon he preached on Sunday at New Mount Olive Baptist Church, a historic African American church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It was the first time he spoke publicly in that city since resigning from Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in 2015 after admitting to an extramarital affair.

"'It was also the first time since 2015 that my mom, one of my brothers, and two of my three children heard me speak publicly', the 'Jesus + Nothing = Everything' author revealed. 'It was an emotional morning for me.' Tchividjian began his sermon, based on Philippians 3:4-9, by revealing that before his downward spiral, he was a successful pastor who led a large, well-known church, had written numerous best-selling books, enjoyed a large TV presence, and traveled all around the country speaking at conferences.

'According to the world's standards, I had everything [...] I had somewhat of an impressive resume', he said. 'I had a tight family, I had money,

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[24] Lean MarieAnn Klett, "Tullian Tchividjian Preaches on God's Faithfulness After Sex Scandal: 'I Broke My Own Life'", in: Christian Post 9 February 2018. Source: https://www.christianpost.com/news/tullian-tchividjian-preaches-on-gods-faithfulness-after-sex-scandal-i-broke-my-own-life-217154/?utm_source=newsletter [last accessed 25.07.2025].

[25] Cf. https://www.tullian.net/articles/everything-minus-jesus-equals-nothing [last accessed 25.07.2025].

I had influence, I had a good reputation, I had tons of support.' In many ways, Tchividjian said, he was a 'celebrity pastor'. And then it all came crashing down. 'I'm 45 years old now, and my life is broken in ways now that it never was for the first 42 years of my life', he admitted. 'Two things that I had come to believe were secure forever were my marriage and my career. I lost both during the late spring, early summer of 2015 due to my own sin, my own selfishness. I was unfaithful to my wife, and therefore I deserved to lose both my marriage, and the ministry God had given me, and I lost it all very publicly.'

With those two losses, Tchividjian said, came 'a thousand other losses', including the 'loss of friendships, the loss of peace and security on my three kids' faces, the loss of purpose, the loss of credibility, the loss of confidence in God's goodness, the loss of financial stability, the loss of hope, the loss of joy, the loss of opportunity, the loss of life as I knew it.'

Overnight, his life went from feeling like a 'fairytale' to a 'violent tragedy'. 'I broke my own life, I broke my own family, and I broke the hearts of people who loved and trusted me. I wanted to die. I literally wanted to die', the former pastor said. His voice breaking, Tchividjian revealed he even penned a suicide note.

'It was the first time in 42 years I'd been alive that I had no hope whatsoever', he said. 'How did I get to that place? How did anyone get to the place where they are actually contemplating killing themselves? I had never been to that dark place before.' Often, we don't realize how much we depend on the things that make life worth living until they're gone, the pastor said, explaining his worth, value, and security was anchored in his family, success and praise. When those things were gone, 'I no longer knew who I was. I felt dead, therefore, I might as well be dead', he said. After six years at the helm of Coral Ridge, Tchividjian resigned in the summer of 2015 after confessing to infidelity. He was also deposed of his pastoral credentials by the South Florida Presbytery and divorced Kim in a very public breakdown of his marriage.

During this dark season, Tchividjian said that a good friend of his told him, 'The purpose behind the suffering you are going through is to kick you into a new freedom from false definitions of who you are.' Those words, Tchividjian said, helped him realize that his identity should be firmly rooted in Jesus Christ's accomplishments and victory – not his own. 'You are not what you do, you are what Jesus has done for you', he emphasized. 'Because of what Jesus has done for you, you don't need to spend your life trying to earn the approval and acceptance and affection that you long for, because Jesus has already earned God's approval, God's acceptance, and God's affection for you.'

Christianity, he said, is fundamentally about substitution – that 'Jesus has come to do for you what you could not do for yourself.' 'Because Jesus won for you, you're free to lose', Tchividjian, who remarried in 2016, contended. 'Because Jesus was strong for you, you're free to be weak. Because Jesus was someone, you're free to be no one. Because Jesus was extraordinary, you're free to be ordinary. Because Jesus succeeded for you, you're free to fail [...]. No sin of yours will ever tempt God to leave you or forsake you, ever.'

When we understand the profundity of the Gospel, we are able to find our identity in Christ, he stressed. 'It's true that Jesus plus nothing equals everything, and that everything minus Jesus equals nothing. But this doesn't mean that our struggle is over', he said. 'God is committed to setting us free, even if it means we have to lose a leg so we can finally dance. Even it means we have to lose an eye so we can finally see.' He concluded: 'Your brokenness in this life isn't going away, but neither is God. He will be there with you, He will never leave you, He will never forsake you. You may let go of Him, but He will never, ever let go of you.'

Really Life Example Two

This testimony followed an interview which I had with this person. The person involved is a young and dynamic Zambian who served as a missionary outside his country. I have his permission to publish the interview I had with him. I have changed his name at his own request.

Me: What title do you want us to give this interview?

Ben: The Pain of Moral failure

Me: What do you think led to the moral failure?

Ben: I can think of two or three reasons:

a) My personal pride
b) The devil capitalized on my need to marry, and I succumbed to the temptation.
c) Lack of support from my partners in ministry when I mentioned my intention to marry from the local people among whom I was serving.
d) Background (I believed that since I was a virgin I may suffer from sexual dysfunction). When the girl's relatives noticed that I was interested in her, they set me up and since I wanted to find out whether I could function sexually I succumbed to the temptation.

Me: What psychological and spiritual emotions did you experience when you discovered that the girl had become pregnant and consequently you were put on discipline?

Ben: I hated myself and wished that the Lord could just take me home assuming I was still worthy to be accepted by him. I daily prayed and cried a lot. I learned to cry – the best thing that ever happened to me. Surprisingly this is the time I discovered myself (began a relationship with myself). I appreciated the Grace of God without doubt. I became more forgiving to people than before. I became poor physically and spiritually. I started desiring and hungering God more in this time. I discovered those who were not my true friends (unfortunately) and those who were my true friends.

Me: In which way did some people's response hurt you?

Ben: I could hear people saying I was a dirty person that they wouldn't love me to be part of them. Some believers could avoid me by not greeting me. I knew that some people had done the worse things than I did but because their sin was concealed, they seemed to be holier, BUT: I appreciate people who were speaking in my life, those who would encourage me to hold on to the Lord. People who opened their homes to host us played a very important role than words can describe. These are my heroes.

Me: What counsel would you give to a minister of the Gospel experiencing moral failure?

Ben: Admit the sin (Don't justify the sin or mistake). Be broken and be vulnerable to God and people. Pick the broken pieces and start all over again. Expect people to talk. Give people the right to criticize you and don't react to what they say. People are hurt and they can say anything, please forgive the people and don't hold any grudge against people as people do sense what kind of spirit you have whether a rebellious spirit and repentant spirit. Tell the devil I will rise again, and this is scriptural (A righteous man can fall many times and rise again). Find a person (whether individual or a couple) to whom you can be accountable and let them be your mentor and allow them to speak in your life. Put into writing (journaling) whatever the Lord is communicating to you in your life. This is the time to stay closer to the Lord than never before – Run to God instead in order not to give the devil a leeway into your heart/life.

Me: How did you embark on the path to restoration?

Ben: I took responsibility for my sin (no blame shifting). I started reading the Bible a lot especially scriptures talking about people who failed like David (Ps 51), Jacob, Peter, etc. The Lord was giving me a lot of revelations, and he

did speak to me a lot through scriptures (e.g. Jr 15:19-21) in this time. I made a resolution to face the mistake, and I took myself back home to face the church discipline so that I don't save my discipline in absentia. So, I came from Malawi back to the Church and found myself a Job to earn income to survive as I lost the whole support to live on as a missionary (It was tough). Worked on normalizing and unifying my family so I only stayed for 3 months then went back to see my family and came back for work. I stayed for another two months then went back to collect my family from Malawi to live in Zambia. This helped the people to see that we were a normal family (husband, wife and a child) as any other.

The first thing which helped me a lot was that I admitted the sin (my grave mistake). At first, I wanted to justify but the more I was wanting to justify the more it was hurting me and the body of Christ but as soon as I admitted I felt a sense of relief and from that time I knew that the way to go would be to be vulnerable and be broken before the Lord and men. I also wrote a letter for myself addressing God. The family of believers is a key to one's restoration, no doubt and it cannot be over emphasized. I owe it to people who stood with me in that difficult time.

Useful Suggestions to Avoid Moral Failure in Ministry and Leadership

It's absolutely necessary that we assume that all can fall for we all face temptation – such is a good starting place. Temptation is not sin but when we yield to it then we sin. However, God will provide a way out, a way of escape. The Bible says:

> "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1Cor 10:13 NIV).

Sexual temptation is no respecter of individuals, no respecter of theological titles and indeed no respecter of how spiritual one is. Given the right circumstances, each one of us is capable of succumbing since no-one of us is beyond the reach of temptation.

Pay attention to your spiritual surveillance

Pay attention to spiritual lapses in your daily life. As a leader you are always giving out and can easily neglect the replenishing of your spiritual reservoir. It's important to ***keep the Spirit's fire burning*** by praying regularly,

worshipping God intimately, reading the Bible consistently and living and depending on God's grace personally. The leading and filling of the Holy Spirit daily should the hall mark of a leader's lifestyle.

Keep your marriage alive

Maintenance of the marriage is not an option for a leader. A leader must regularly evaluate his relationship with the spouse especially watching for warnings of discontentment, lack of communication and poor sexual relationship. The couple must be intentional about spending quality time together to renew their s spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical bond.

Be guarded

If you find thoughts continually drawn someone else who is not your spouse more than your own partner, then you need to take certain precautions. For example, you may find yourself looking forward in a special way to being with this person either at work (if she or he is a workmate) or outside work hours. You might even prefer that others not know that you are meeting up with this person. If you find looking forward to giving this person long and extended hugs – watch out. Sometimes the person may be sexually attracted to you and will send texts or make calls of appreciation or send small gifts. Bear in mind that a relationship can be sexual long before it becomes erotic. The leader experiencing marital issues must be extra careful, especially when the opposite sex seems to be 'more understanding' than their spouse. We all must live with the frightening but incredible motivating knowledge that we could fall into sexual immorality if we are not guarded and learn when to back off.

Tame your thoughts

Every sin begins within your mind. Thoughts inform the feelings and feelings result in actions. Hence the secret is to deal with your cloudy thoughts before you are led astray. We live in a sex mad society where our minds are bombarded by visual and verbal stimulation on a daily basis. In the world of advertising, sex sells just about everything from clothes to cars. In the music industry the so-called love songs are but lust songs. Be careful what you feed your mind on. Not only do you need to hold yourself accountable to God, but you must hold yourself accountable to yourself. It is said that adultery starts in the head before it gets to the bed. I once read

this quote, "Immorality is the cumulative product of small mental indulgencies and minuscule compromises, the immediate consequences of which were, at the last time, indiscernible". Very true!

Have a peer-spiritual mentor

Many leaders feel isolated eve n those in multiple staff members. In fact, the more the prominent a leader becomes the more the need for accountability (and ironically the less they get it). While they may be some accountability structures within the church it is advisable that the leader has a peer mentor of the same gender. Peer-spiritual mentorship involves entrusting your reputation to another and opening yourself to your peer's honest investigation. The risks involved in this relationship are fewer compared to the benefits. Peers know each other's strengths and weaknesses and have nothing to prove to one another. The times of mutual accountability are spiritually therapeutic and can produce incredible results.

Think of the consequences all the time

When we break God's laws, they as a matter of fact break us. We must always know and think through what it really cost us, our family and the Lord. Immorality may cause spiritual, emotional, mental and relational damage. We may sin alone, but many people are collectively hurt. I have a friend who has a list of consequences that would result from his immorality. He carries this list with him when traveling and refers to it in moments of weakness. He says it clearly speaks to him as regards the law of choice and consequences and fills his heart with reverence and love for God.

The ongoing revelations of many sex scandals in the Church should be a timely and huge reminder, for us, that no one is infallible. We are all flawed and indeed live with the possibility of failure – save for the grace of God. I hope that the above simple guidelines will help you to avoid becoming another statistic. We must live as far from the edge of sexual sin as possible.

If however, you've already experienced moral failure or are experiencing one right now – I want to remind you that there is grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Pray for forgiveness from God and ask for forgiveness from those you sinned against, repent and turn to God. God will give you a clean and clear conscience. It's not too late to start all over again.

Questions for Reflection

1. Have you ever done anything with someone other than your spouse that you felt was sexually inappropriate?
2. What are the advantages of having a mentor/prayer partner that you can share your spiritual struggles with?
3. What guises do sexual temptations take for you? How can you deal with these?
4. What are some of the factors in our postmodern world that make sexual temptation so strong?

Memory Verse

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God" (1Thess 4:3-6).

Chapter 9: Money

Introduction

You have heard it said that power is money and money is power. "Money makes the world go round", so goes the old adage. Undoubtedly, it can be said that money is one of the greatest inventions of all time. However, money is not a thing in itself but is simply a medium of exchange, store of value, unit of account – an evolving symbol of economic value and social power. Money on its own is nothing but paper. Money only has as much worth as people grant it. We all know that 'Money Matters" is a big issue in the lives of most people. We witness how many people spend most of their waking hours making money, spending money, worrying about money, quarrelling over money, and trying to guard their money. Differences over money have become an increasing cause of divorce and church divisions.

It is no secret that money and power are inextricably connected. Different financial abilities create a particular kind of power dynamic in given a relationship. Consequently, the one with more money has more power because people with money often seem to have a great deal of influence and respect. People want to matter, and this desire drives them to want to become rich. The motivation for people to be rich is not that they necessarily want to buy things. It's so they can wield power over others. People want influence and respect, and they see that people with money *have* influence and respect, so they seek money. This is a misguided notion. Possessing money, spending it and forever pursuing it will not allow one to become the purposeful, important individual they seek to be. It should not be that money should result in ***influence and respect – instead, influence and respect should often lead to money.***

Money in Christian Ministries

Christian ministries need resources, especially financial resources to function and realize their vision. Without finances no ministry can fulfill its mandate let alone maintain its facilities. If there is one topic that is often talked about in organizations, it is finances. Financial Development or how finances are raised and utilized has become a major focus in most organizations. Sad enough, bad financial stewardship has led to many a conflict often resulting into splints and falling out of individuals.

Every ministry or organizational leader is confronted with the need to finance what God is leading the ministry or organization to do and lack of finances always seems to be a problem. However, I am not convinced that there is a money problem in the Lord's work. The main problem is the lack of commitment among the members or the Church and hence they hold on to their money or spend it on things that do not have Kingdom value. Consequently, the solution is for leaders to go after the money in some 'creative ways' for projects and missions. Exaggerated ministry reports aimed at attracting more funds are generated. It is also not unusual to see plagues, certificates and souvenirs awarded to those who give in categories in increasing amounts from bronze membership to diamond. The more the give the more prayers and visitations they get from their leaders. Those that cannot afford to give as much are least thought of and prayed for by their leaders.

Some of these creative ways include the formation of a "Fund Raising" Committee to increase the income. Sometimes the envelopes are printed with amounts on them for the members to enclose their cheques. Those that give are given promises and assurances that they would be blessed in some manner and their prayers answered. We have witnessed various other unbiblical ways in which people are coerced and manipulated to give. How about approaching this issue differently? Instead of only promoting giving, we think about removing the hindrances. Because no matter the amount of effort put to raise money if there are spiritual hindrances the efforts will be wasted.

Money is a big issue for all Christian ministries. It is for this reason that the Bible addresses it so often. Leaders must diligently lead Christian ministries wisely in this important matter of the Kingdom. Below are some guidelines that give a sound perspective on the Christian relationship with money.

Christ (Not Money) is Building His Church

We should always have it at the back of our minds that the Church belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he wants the church to grow and be financed more than the ministry or organization does. Jesus said: And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it (Mt 16:18-19 NIV).

The Lord Jesus said that ***HE (not the money)*** would build the church. We are not to build the church FOR Jesus with money. While money is needed in Christian ministry there must be no dependence whatsoever on money where it comes to building the Kingdom of God. The Great Commission is

not about building the Church buildings; we have been commanded to make disciples and not to make money (Mt 28:18-20). Sadly, we see a lot of church buildings built at high costs but not a lot of discipleship. God is looking for authentic discipleship before money. Authentic discipleship involves having the right attitude toward money. Referring to poor Corinthians who gave sacrificially and out of their poverty 2 Corinthians 8:5-6: "And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So, we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part". God is not looking for your money first but your allegiance and total commitment to him. Leaders, if your members will not finance God's Vision and Mission then they are not disciples. Christians are to obey what God tells them to do, and in that Jesus builds His church. Indeed, if Christ is going to build His church, then He will finance His vision and mission. The Christian responsibility is to listen, obey and remove the hindrances to growth. Sometimes the hindrance is due to bad stewardship of the funds by those entrusted to use and expend it. However, money does not build the kingdom of God, but the Spirit does. Money is a toll that can be used from human's perspective to help invest in the kingdom.

The Leader Must Not Manage the Money Bag

The leader should never, ever, ever be the sole person to handle money. The temptation is always to think that because I am the leader I must handle money matters by myself and just have a few individuals around me to rubber stamp my decisions so it may seem to the public domain that I am held accountable by others. Money issues must be left to the financial qualified and skilled people to handle while the leader is kept well informed and holds the finance people accountable. Leaders have to remain "above reproach" and that's especially applies in this area of finances. Temptation is huge for all leaders in the area of money.

Managing of finances is outside the call of the organizational leader. The leader has not been called to handle the finances but to lead the organization toward fulfilling its vision and mission. A good example is that of Acts 6 where the apostles realized that management of food issues was taking them away from what they had been called to do as leaders. Instead, they focused on their responsibility of continually being in prayer and the ministry of the word. Leaders are not called to be financial experts. They should know their call. Financial issues must be left to those who are called and are qualified to manage them. When it comes to finances, even a Christian organization or church must be run like a business. That is to say the

prudent use of funds would ensure that the organization 'business' is kept afloat. For the organization to grow and support itself it must have a sound financial base – hence finances have to be handled professionally.

Sometimes leaders try to be too spiritual with finances. They claim and name the amount of money they want to come into the bank accounts by faith. This is blind faith. It is true that we need to trust God to meet our financial needs, but it is foolish to write out a cheque and expect the bank to cash out when they is no money in the account. I have heard some people talk about this as 'Faith Cheques". I call it stupidity because the bank doesn't operate on faith. Banks work in the realm of reality.

Money Is Power

Money has a force or power of its own and that if we do not manage it, it will manage or control us. It is therefore wise and recommendable that the ministry or organization leader is not the only one who decides how the money is going to be spent. When this happens, the leader becomes too powerful and is above accountability. In leadership, there is always the temptation of corruption, in which instead of being devoted to loyalty to the Lord Jesus, the leader becomes loyal to money and power.

The leader doesn't need the load of responsibility for managing and controlling finances on his/her own. Otherwise, eventually people begin to mistrust the system, the leader, and even the organization. To allow this situation is to court trouble for an organization. Collaboration is the best approach to most decisions but especially spending someone else's (the Lord's) money. There is great wisdom in collaborative approach as great ideas are shared, and accountability is created. However, it is the responsibility of the leader to see that the finances are handled in a professional manner and protect the financial foundation of the organization. Regardless of the leader's involvement, the final responsibility financial matters is the leaders. How the leader manages the organization's finances is a witness to the people in his or her organization and community. They are watching and will make judgment of his or her and organization based on his or her financial integrity

Those in leadership and charged with the responsibility of handling finances must be open about finances. While they don't have to share details that people don't care about, there shouldn't be any secrets when people ask. Keeping people abreast of the general financial welfare of the church or organization is critical. A few years ago, I heard from a Christian organization that was in serious financial difficulty, but no one in the organization except the leaders and bookkeepers even knew. When this was discovered,

there was obvious repercussion. People were angry, frustrated and hurt. These emotions can usually be avoided if people know in advance where the organization stands financially.

Money Is a Spiritual Matter

Money is more than just paper and coin, or something secured on some plastic card. Our attitude towards money affects our spiritual lives for better or for worse. Our relationship to money and material things can often become barriers to our spiritual growth and development if we are not careful. God doesn't fully have a person's heart until He has control of their finances. For the follower of Christ his or her attitude and relationship to money is a vital discipleship issue. Money, for many people, has become a major spiritual battle as they wage war between God and the rival god of money and materialism. In our communities, money and worthy have been idolized.

The challenge for us as followers of Christ is whether we will exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship and serve the created things rather than the Creator. There is always clear and present danger and temptation for Christ followers to serve both God and money. However, the Bible is very clear on this issue: "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (Mt 6:24 NIV). The Apostle Paul timely warning of years ago is still valid today:

> "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1Tim 6:6-10 NIV).

Our contemporary culture is adrift with myths about money and wealthy and its power and influence. We have been misled to confuse our self-worth with our net worth. If you are to have a proper perspective on money and wealthy the church is probably the only remaining place where the issues can be discussed in non-market terms. Today's Christian leaders must be prepared to articulate, teach, train, and encourage their people toward a biblical perspective on money and possessions. We live at a time in our culture, in which possession has become an obsession; wealthy has emerged as a "blessing from God" that causes leaders to manipulate people

to make money for themselves. With all kinds of unbiblical teachings on money and wealthy the financial and spiritual well-being of many Christians are at stake.

Managing Finances with Integrity

Leaders can be tempted to steal money or other valuable assets of the church for their own personal gain. Do not deceive yourself and think that fraud could never happen in your church; the truth is that no church is invulnerable. Unfortunately, many Christians tend to be trusting and even naïve about abuse of finances by religious authority figures. Moreover, even if they suspect the presence of financial abuse by their leaders, they don't want to risk hurting anyone's feelings and tend to avoid confrontation. Fraud is common among churches. There's a several ways that financial fraud can take place in the church. The simplest one is grabbing cash out of the offering bag, but also it can happen in the manner that a church keeps financial records. It is mainly at the record keeping stage that frauds take places. You see fraud not only results in poor stewardship of resources but also diminished trust and confidence in the church and puts the reputation of God's church at risk.

Below I suggest some ways that may be helpful to manage finances well and minimize the temptation for fraud:

1. Have multiple people handle the money: For example, have two or three trusted people count the money after the offering and recorded. Then the offering should be banked within 24 hours by someone and a record from the bank be retained. In my own church we have a financial committee that works together openly that manage the finances. For easy transactions some churches have a credit card.
2. Establish clear policies about building and vehicle use as well as contributions, use of credit cards, benevolence, and have clearly defined procedures regarding signing cheques and making purchases. Let me share with you some of the internal policies that we have in place in my church.

We have a financial policy in place. Some of the content in this policy include:

a) The signatories must not be the same individuals authorizing the expense

b) We have agreed with the bank that two individuals to sign the cheque.
c) No signatory will sign a blank cheque.
d) Every check will have written documentation i.e. receipt, invoice, payment request, etc. and then filled.
e) The offering for each Sunday will be made known to the congregation the following Sunday.
f) A quarterly financial report is made available to all church members, and they have the right to query or seek clarification.

3. Depending on the requirement of your country (and also your policy) there may be a need to hire an independent auditor to perform a compilation and review of your annual financial statements and internal controls.

We must bear in mind that while financial policies and other controls are good things to have in place, it's more important to have the right people and a framework of good biblical financial stewardship. Some churches are privileged to have financially qualified people in their congregations and do make good use of them.

Some years back I had an invitation, together with two of my colleagues to undertake a teaching tour on "Financial Management" in the nine districts of the Copperbelt Province in my country. Some of leaders suspected that church finances were being misappropriated by some leaders. As a consequence, the giving drastically reduced. What the interaction with the leaders revealed was that indeed there was gross mismanagement and, in many cases, straight theft of the church coffers. The reasons for this were:

1. Lack of internal controls. This was seen as a perceived opportunity to misapply and misappropriate the money. Even where there was an awareness to come up with internal controls these were conveniently and deliberately ignored.
2. Most of the leaders were under financial pressure and hence faced great temptation to 'help' themselves with church funds. Hence embezzlement is not the primary problem but is a symptom of something else going on in the life of the embezzler. Some of them intended to loan themselves with a view that they would pay back but this was not to be.
3. There was yet another school of thought that reasoned that since they were working hard for the church with little remuneration they saw nothing sinister in using some of their money for personal needs.

4. Perhaps the most common reason was that continual exposure to church funds with little or no accountability put the church funds at risk of being misappropriated.

It was especially painful to the church members where people gave sacrificially to the Lord's work only to have the money embezzled by the leaders. When money is stolen it is an act of betrayal as much as it is an act of deceit. It's betrayal because your trust in someone that you know, and respect is violated. It is deceit because the culprit would have possibly manipulated the financial report or given false report. Usually, this manipulation happens over a period of time before the anomaly is discovered. During our interaction with the leaders there was a case in point where the culprit's spouse was shocked and even defended her husband when the scandal was unearthed. It wasn't until evidence was made available to her that she changed her mind.

Conclusion

Leadership success is wrongly associated with wealth and money. Certainly, this is a false measure of success. It is an illusion to think that the more money and power one has the more successful they are. As a leader you can be successful but not wealthy. Any leader who views successful leadership through the lens of money is terribly bankrupt leadership-wise. True leadership is about balancing one's professions, personal and spiritual life. It's about empowering other people to reach their God given potential and not about accumulating wealthy.

A leader who loves money is walking on slippery ground. There are so many leaders who may be financially rich but are not connected with those around them. Their main interest is to use the people around them for gainful purposes. Such leaders are selfish, insensitive, and insecure. These leaders find their identity in their ministry, titles and money.

Questions for Reflection

1. How would you, in own words, explain Hebrews 13:5 and the Pauline teaching of 1 Timothy 6:10?
2. If you were responsible to lead the financial committee of your church/organization, what best practices would you put in place to facilitate financial accountability and transparency?
3. If you had funds misappropriated in your church/organization, how would you deal with it?

Memory Verse

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'" (Heb 13:5).

Chapter 10: Power

"The highest mode of corruption is the abuse of power." (Auliq Ice)

Introduction

In our contemporary world the amassing and exercise of power is on the rise in all spheres of private and public life – be it secular or sacred. Contemporary culture is largely obsessed with power. Many leaders are exercising power in new and frightening ways. Many will agree that being in a position of power is awesome and make no mistake about it the temptation to abuse power is ever present. Richard Foster makes the following observation about power:

> "Power profoundly impacts our interpersonal relationships, our social relationships, and our relationship with God. Nothing touches us more profoundly for good or for ill than power. Power can destroy or create. The power that destroys demands ascendancy; it demands total control. It destroys relationship; it destroys trust; it destroys dialogue; it destroys integrity. And this is true whether we look through the macrocosm of human history or microcosm of our own personal history."[26]

Abuse of power is often regarded as a result of absolute power by those in leadership. Autocratic type of leadership is responsible for some of the most shocking and horrendous acts of cruelty towards the subjects and to those perceived to be enemies. It is vital therefore that as a community of faith we have a clear and biblical understanding and appreciation of power and how it should be used to serve and empower others. However, before we revert to the all-important topic of power abuse, let us focus for now on power application in leadership.

What is Power?

Power is the ability to influence other people. It refers to the capacity to affect the behavior of the subordinate with the control of resources. It is an exchange relationship that occurs in transactions between an agent and

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[26] Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline, Money, Sex and Power, Prayers from the Heart* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994), 575.

a target. The agent is the person who uses the power and target is the receipt of the attempt to use power. I like the way Evah Kungu defines power and differentiates it from leadership:

> "Power is the ability of an individual to exercise some form of control over another individual. On the other hand, leadership is the ability to create a vision, motivate people to work towards achieving the vision, coaching and building the team that will pioneer the completion of the vision and managing the end delivery of the vision."[27]

Piper defines power as follows:

> "Power is the capacity to get what you want. The capacity may lie in the fact that you have great physical strength; or that you have a position of authority, like a parent, teacher, policeman, or Member of Congress. Or it may lie in the fact that you have more money than anyone in the group, or that you are very beautiful or handsome. All of those capacities are good gifts of God. We don't have any of them solely by our own design or effort. God is the decisive Giver of them all. And all those capacities to get what you want can be used to do evil or to do good. How you use your power shows where your heart is, what you love, what you treasure most – what you worship."[28]

Power presupposes authority and influence. But then how are these interconnected or distinct from each other.

Distinction between Power, Authority and Influence

If power is the ability to influence someone else, then influence is the process of affecting the thoughts, behavior and feelings of another person. Authority is the right to influence another person. Authority is a legitimate right to influence others.

1. "Authority is right to influence others, but power is ability to influence people.
2. Authority is legitimate while power is not.

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[27] "Difference Between Power and Leadership". Source: http://www.differencebetween.net/business/difference-between-power-and-leadership/#ixzz5rQ0Az2Pr [last accessed 22.07.2025].

[28] John Piper, Living in the Light: Money, Sex & Power Making the Most of Three Dangerous Opportunities (Charlotte: The Good Book Company. 2016), 9, 19.

3. Authority confers legitimacy to power, but power itself need not be legitimate."[29]

Someone has said that Power is a capacity to pursue what you value.

Power, in and of itself is not bad or evil. Power is a gift from God to be used to the glory of God and for the blessing of humankind in the right context. It becomes wrong when is possessed by power and begins to use for self-gratification and glorification. God has all the power and authority, and he uses these to serve humanity and not exploit humankind. All power or authority that humans have is but delegated from God and must be used in the same manner that God executes it, that is to serve and empower others.

Being in a position of power is awesome because it affords one the opportunity to create change for better or for worse depending on how you use that power. The only individuals who are remembered are those who impact the lives of others by changing something. No individual is ever remembered for keeping the status quo. You only make an impact as an individual if you influence other individuals. The more you can influence other individuals, the more power you have and the more you matter in the grand scheme of life.

Types of Power

In the late 1950's, John French and Bertram Raven published "The bases of social power" which included five distinct types of power. They later added a sixth. All six of these types of power are part of the fundamental knowledge that all leaders must possess to be effective. Of course, it is not only leaders that possess power. Each of us has power and each of us has the power to choose how our power is used. Knowing what the types of power are and how they can be used (or abused) is important to our ability to make decisions that affect both our sphere of influence and our personal core values.

The five bases of power that were identified by John French and Bertram Raven in the early 1960's through a study they had conducted on power in leadership roles. The study showed how different types of power affected one's leadership ability and success in a leadership role.

Important Types of Power in leadership are listed below:

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[29] Quoted from https://ebrary.net/2986/management/definition_power [last accessed 26.07.2025].

Legitimate Power

Legitimate power also known as position power or official power comes to the leader when the organization's authority is accepted. It comes from the rules of the organization. It gives leaders the power to control resources and to reward and punish others.

People accept this power because they believe that it is desirable and necessary to maintain order and discipline in a society. For example, parents, teachers, managers, police etc. have legitimate power only when their authority is accepted in the positions they hold.

Charismatic Power

Charismatic power or power of personality comes from each leader individually. This is the power of attraction or devotion, the desire of one person to admire another.

The leaders have a personal magnetism, an air of confidence and a belief in objectives that attracts and holds followers. People follow because their emotions tell them to do so. A subordinate feels a positive attraction towards a leader by identifying himself with the leader. This power helps the subordinate to understand and value the leader so much that he understands and acts according to the expectations of the leader. It helps him act as his own boss and behave in ways he thinks the boss will want. Joan of Arc in France, Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas in India are historical examples of charismatic leaders.

Expert Power

Expert power also known as the authority of knowledge comes from specialized learning. This is the power of knowledge and skill of a special kind that are important in getting the job done. A person's professional competence or knowledge gives him expert power. His credibility increases. He can lead other persons to trust his judgments and decisions.

Reward Power

Reward power comes from authority. This arises from the ability to reward worthy behavior. The leader has the power to give tangible rewards such as promotion, time off from work and attractive work assignments to the subordinate.

Also psychological rewards like praise, appreciation, approval and recognition can be given by the leader to the subordinate. The subordinate has to believe that he has access to higher authorities and therefore he can give rewards. This reward power can also increase the leader's charismatic and legitimate power.

Coercive Power

This power comes from authority. It is the ability to threaten or punish. The leader can give tangible punishments like dismissal, demotion, low rating etc. Psychological punishments include criticism, avoidance, disapproval, satirical remarks to the subordinate.

The reward power helps to avoid something undesirable. Self-esteem of the subordinate increases because of reward power and decreases because of punishment or coercive power.

Political Power

This power comes from the support of a group. It arises from a leader's ability to work with people and social systems to gain their allegiance and support. It develops in all organizations.

There are a number of tactics that leaders can use to gain political power. One such tactic is social exchange which implies, 'If you do something for me, I will do something for you.'

It relies on the norm of reciprocity in society where two persons in a continuing relationship feel a strong obligation to repay their social debts to each other. When these trade-offs are successful, both parties get something they want. Another way to acquire political power is to give selective service to supporters.

To relate political power with the path-goal model, a leader should work in collaboration with employees to help them see and obtain objectives that support the overall vision of the organization.[30]

Abusive Leadership

Abuse of power has led to the fall of many kingdoms and countries. Power abuse has seen the demise of many an organization and church.

[30] Smriti Chand, "*Six Important Types of Power in Leadership*". Source: http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/business-management/6-important-types-of-power-in-leadership/2560 [last accessed 26.07.2025].

Individuals as well have not been spared. We read and hear of stories of celebrities, influential politicians, and business leaders that have been involved in power abuse scandals. Perhaps as you read you know of someone close or distance who have had their Christian ministry or life wrecked due to misuse of power. Thankful many that have confessed and repented have been restored. We are, however, thankful that we serve a God of restoration.

However, in Christian organizations and churches, sadly, there are a lot of different kinds of harassment and abuse. Some abuse is not often obvious. Someone whose 'abuse antennae' is alert would wonder How come such communities can live with abuse and not be troubled by it. On the other hand, one asks How is it possible that spiritual leaders can conduct themselves in ways that are so destructive of people and relationships in their constituencies? I think one of the challenges we have is that followers and leaders draw the lines about what is acceptable in a different place. Leaders draw it in a place that gives them far more power and capacity to rule over their followers. This happens because there is a culture informs them that someone with a title "entitled". This sense of entitlement is deeply enshrined in the minds of the people, and the culture is so supportive of the practices that sustain it, that leaders cease to recognize abuse when it happens. These leaders don't notice the unacceptable nature of their behavior because it is normal behavior in their context. As a matter of fact, the rules of some organizations or churches are written to support the interests of the leadership team. Consequently, the practices that are seen as acceptable are the ones that work for the top leadership team.

When people are harassed, they may feel belittled, hurt, estranged, disempowered and emotionally abused. Time and again in the church women, young people, persons of the non-dominant culture or tribe, those of different theological persuasion, etc. are sidelined and denied certain privileges. These individuals are left hurt and feeling worthless because they feel ostracized. Very often they end up leaving the church and a worst will have nothing else to do with the community of faith.

Some years back I was facilitating at a leadership seminar on 'Church leadership and Abuse' when of the participants shared with the group what he had experienced during his Church's Annual Business Meeting. As a Senior Pastor he was well respected (at least so he thought) and often didn't make himself accountable to the Leadership Team. He had the final say when it came to budgeting and hardly got advice from his team. Two years before this seminar he lost three key leaders who moved on to other churches. He put the blame entirely on these individuals. He saw their leaving as riddance to troublemakers. During the seminar he realized for

the first time how abusive he had been and repented of the same. A few days later this is what he wrote me:

> "I should have learnt my lessons earlier because I recall being in a situation where someone had expressed surprise that my behavior in a church meeting was experienced as abusive. I was shocked when I was told that the way that I behaved was hurtful to others. When I saw people weep and be very, very angry at me I simply considered them immature. In retrospect I see this as no excuse. I think there was no awareness on my part that I was abusing people. I honestly didn't know what I was doing. To be honest, I was a leader of good will and faith who actually didn't realize that what I was doing was wrong. The culture of abuse was so strong, and the practices so ingrained, that I was blinded to it."

This participant's story above is very indicative that it is possible that a majority of the abusers do not realize that they are abusing people. However, some abusers do know what they are doing. It's therefore of utmost importance that leaders are intentionally exposed to issues of power abuse.

Exposing Abuse

In the Church in Africa and in many of 'Honor and Shame' cultures and indeed in some cultures where 'Power and Fear' define the way in which people relate to one another exposing abuse is a huge challenge. However, there is a ray of hope as consciousness is rising, and change may be possible because abusers are being named and shamed. This is possible even in such cultures the victims of abuse stand up and name their experience because of strong advocacy to do so. It is often uncomfortable that the survivors of abuse have to confront their abusers. However, there is no more effective way to get the issue before the community.

In my own country, Zambia, many people are now realizing that by their silence they have been complicit in supporting the behavior of abusers. It is encouraging to note that most people are acknowledging their responsibility to denounce bad behavior when it is present. The advocacy has empowered them to support individuals who resist harassment and abuse. To remain mute when we see abuse in any shape of form is to be an accomplice in the same. My appeal to all well-meaning people is that we have to stop accepting abuse of power in our communities and the harm that it does. We must be bold and courageous to name it whenever and wherever we see it and instead offer alternative ways of being in community.

I believe that the people who experience the abuse are going to be the best placed to see and name it. Hard as this might be, it has to be done. Increasing cases of reported abuse by those in power is a good sign that we are on the right trajectory in my country. However, these statistics are still very low. To be truly human is to have to protect and support those who identify themselves as victims of abuse. In our communities those individuals from the privileged communities must engage others and understand their experience so that they can be advocates for justice and peace.

Abuse of Power

It is very interesting how Christians get horribly upset and up in arms whenever they find out that one of their church leaders has engaged in sexual sin or embezzlement. Yes, they ought to be because leaders are the ones who should be modeling a pure and chaste life for the sake of Jesus and his Bride, the Church. However, what is surprising is that that while most often they don't turn a blind eye to sexual sin or sins like embezzlement, we often excuse or gloss over leaders' abuse of power. How sad!

Abuse of power takes many shapes and forms and includes the following actions taken against the individual of groups of people, humiliation, threats, coercion, different types of discrimination, bullying, dominance, harassment, verbal and physical assault, lack of respect, emotional, psychological and spiritual black mail, over-controlling, etc. The list is endless. All human institutions, including the church, experience the abuse of power.

It is rather unfortunate that the Church which should be the salt of the earth and light of the world is riddled with much power abuse. Far from abating, abuse of power and corruption seems to be increasing in the Church, as is clearly demonstrated by the recent scandals in the media involving prominent Christian leaders. In addition, abuse of power and corruption are no longer solely attributable to senior leaders, but these are widespread even among the congregants who have some form of power. This abuse has led to questions about the ability and legitimacy of the Church as an agent of positive change in the community.

Power abuse in Christian organizations and churches is largely an institutional problem, rather than a cultural one because of the predominance of arbitrary power. Most churches and organizations grant their leaders broad powers without establishing effective procedural mechanisms to circumscribe their exercise. In the absence of effective control, these powers often aid the abuse of power and corruption. Even in cases where there are policies and regulations some leaders often disregard

them especially where they view these requirements as hindering the attainment of their personal and selfish agenda. And because the rules are dispensed with whenever it becomes convenient to do so, a culture of impunity emerges where rules cease to be authoritative. Sometimes leaders use their spirituality to intimidate their followers into silence or into obeying illegal commands, largely because of the absence of accountability mechanisms. Indeed, most followers are often unwilling accomplices to abuses of power. The members only learn of abuses of power and corruption long after they have occurred, by which time the damage caused is nearly irreparable because the sin is covered in the name of "touch not the anointed".

I was once asked to consult with the Board Chair of a Christian organization where I learnt about an ambitious, power-hungry, agenda-driven leader lie and manipulate her team and information. This new leader was intent on ridding the organization of those who weren't like her and stood up to challenge her decisions. Those who supported her and agreed with her policies could stay. If one opposed her, one could expect to lose one's job. Within a year she found stealthy ways to eliminate those who spoke up against what she was involved in. As a result of this leader's leaders' scare tactics the remaining workers were frightened and remained mute. What was sad was that as a director of this organization the dear lady little or no accountability. The governing board was far removed from the everyday goings on and heard only this leader's version of the story. In my assessment it was by far the most dreadful and alarming event I had to deal with. This story of failure to steward power can be retold in many an organization.

We need to think seriously about stewardship of power. We must be alert to it. Bad stewardship of power or the lack of it doesn't just apply to corporate executives and government officials. It applies to church leaders too – unfortunately! I think the church should be talking more about it. How does one remain silent pastors and other church leaders throw temper tantrums and walk out the door when they don't get their way? Congregants and members of Christian organizations have no way of knowing about what transpires unless they personally experience these behaviors or someone present tells on the abuser. Just because a leader is charismatic or gifted is no license for us to be quiet. We must always remember that abuse of power and influence can lead to untold disillusionment and cause irreversible damage to the Church. Leaders who abuse power must bear in mind that they leave a trail of destruction behind them. My friend often quotes Henri Nouwen who once remarked, "What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy

substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people." Godly and authentic leaders are humble in their giftedness and are others-centered. It is therefore of paramount importance that leaders remain vigilant to guard against the enticing temptation of misuse of power and flee from such temptation.

Abusing Biblical Power

The Gospel of Matthew 4 gives a narrative of how Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. It is interesting to note that nature of Satan's temptation is toward the abuse of power.

In the first temptation Satan entices Jesus to turn a stone into bread after Jesus' forty days fast. Hunger is a legitimate human need and a Son of God he had the power to do so. Jesus had fasted for forty days up to this point. His hunger was an obvious, legitimate human need. However, Jesus understood that not even a legitimate need should be met in illegitimate ways. Some hardworking servants of God with legitimate financial needs may be tempted to pilfer some church funds and justify it that they work hard for it and their salaries are very low and consequently fail to feed their family let alone pay the fees for the school going children. It is easy to rationalize wrong when you have the need and ability to meet the need. However difficult the situation, never meet the need illegitimately. It's power abuse!

In the second temptation Satan tells Jesus to jump off the temple and let the angels catch him. This illustrates what some insecure (and sometimes even secure leaders) do. They desire to prove their power in the public domain. These are the kind of leaders who seek to show power for power's sake. This is yet another form of power abuse.

The third and final temptation Satan tells Jesus that if he worshipped Satan then Satan would give him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. In this temptation Satan appeals to the core of human desire for power. And this has to do with material acquisition. Materialism is one of the common results of power abuse.

Abusing leaders are not concerned about the welfare of the people they lead. They do not invest in building relationships for mutual benefit but are more bent towards controlling the people with biblical power sources such as the Bible and the church constitution and by-laws. It is human nature to seek to control others, and the church setup is no exception. In some churches there is no resemblance of biblical leadership as exposed in the scriptures. One of the most common ways in which leaders attempt to

dominate others is through the inappropriate application of the Biblical teaching. Many a leader demand that their teachings (faulty as it may be) be accepted by their followers. They carry a faulty authoritative prophetic voice equivalent to, "thus says the Lord".

I have witnessed a situation where the leader has tried to impress a top-down hierarchy that requires that the members of the church submit to him unconditionally. It's not unusual for such a leader to quote passages like Mt 10:24 that states "a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master" and Hebrews 13:17a that says, "obey your leaders and submit to them." To simply use these scriptures and demand unconditional submission is being faulty with ones' hermeneutics. One must take the context in consideration. For instance, the whole passage in Matthew is about persecution and suffering due to the relationship of the disciples to Jesus Himself. Hence, the disciples are not "above their master." Christ followers will suffer in the same way as their Master if they continue to follow Him. This passage has no relationship whatsoever with hierarchical obedience within the structure of leadership and authority.

Similarly, Hebrews 13:17 must be interpreted within the context and content given. It gives the reason for submitting to leaders – "They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you". You will notice that the burden of responsibility is placed more on the leaders and how they lead rather than on the followers and how they respond to the leaders.

Dealing with Abuse of Power

In the psycho-social world it is stated that there are two types of power – social and personalized. Social power is used for the benefit of others whilst personalized power benefits the leader in power. Yet, the temptation is for a leader to deceive oneself that they are working for the greater good (social power) but engage in corruption and abuse. We must be alert that power deludes and make us justify the wrong because "after all we have the best interest of our followers". A leader must use power to "get the job done" with integrity. Leaders that are power drunk are toxic and dangerous because the more they possess power, the more they focus on their own egocentric ambitions and the less able they are to see others' perspectives and interests. It's interesting how most often we don't turn a blind eye to sexual sin or sins like embezzlement, we often excuse or gloss over leaders' abuse of power. This is unacceptable and must not be tolerated.

It doesn't matter how spiritual an individual is they are still prone to power abuse. It is therefore vital that there be mechanisms and systems that can hold one accountable. In any significant relationship they ought to be mutual accountability. Where accountability is functioning well the team (both followers and leaders) have an obligation to explain and justify their actions or conduct to one another within the framework of a set of standards to judge whether they have fulfilled their responsibilities in light of these standards, failure to which they may face prescribed consequences. In the context of the Church or organizations accountability mechanisms serve four primary purposes namely:

1. Followers to hold their leaders to account. Leaders are held accountable for the exercise and performance of their duties. Followers should have sufficient information to enable them to scrutinize the conduct of these leaders. If the followers were to find such conduct to be unsatisfactory, they could then indicate their displeasure by calling their leaders to account.
2. To enable the followers to prevent abuse of power and corruption by the leaders. Where such mechanisms are in place they would enable the exposure of unauthorized, illegitimate, or unjust exercises of leadership power.
3. They serve the purpose of keeping the leaders on their toes, by constantly keeping these leaders aware of the fact that they will be called upon to account for their actions, thereby helping the people to prevent abuses of power.
4. They serve the important goal of legitimizing leadership in the perception of the followers by promoting acceptance of leadership authority and confidence in the leadership.

Where abuse of power is present followers should not, in the pretext of preserving their impartiality, be prevented from exposing cases where the leadership is involved in abuse. The followers have a duty to question or even refuse to follow instructions which are motivated by selfish gain by the leadership. Although followers are answerable to their leaders, their first allegiance is to the Lord Jesus Christ before whom they shall stand and give an account one day.

Should followers choose to become whistleblowers in the process of performing this duty, they ought to be given sufficient legal protection. The policies in place should not prevent the followers from disclosing violations of the rule of law, corruption, and abuses of power. Similarly, the concept of respect for the spiritual leaders should not, as is often the case,

be used as a shield against public scrutiny of the actions of leaders on the pretext that the regulation of the senior leaders is a matter for the top leaders alone to resolve.

Malcom Webber writing on how Servant leaders differ from abusive leaders, makes the following observations as highlighted in the table below:[31]

Servant Leader	Abusive Leader
Encourages coworkers to depend on God for themselves.	Creates an atmosphere where the coworkers are permanently dependent on him, thus giving him a sense of power and importance.
Promotes emotional independence from himself.	Promotes emotional dependence on himself. Consequently, others are intimidated by his moodiness.
Liberates the individual, encourages ideas and participation.	Limits individual freedoms, prefers to make all the decisions.
Equips people to be fruitful.	Does not train others to function effectively and independently.
Builds an organization characterized by joy and creativity.	Builds an organization characterized by fear and conformity.

Governance Policies

The Community of Faith is like any other society. It is an establishment with complex power relations, and power can always be abused. When it is abused, it is important to have regulatory structures and policies in place that should hold the power-holders accountable to the constituency they serve. Since as human beings we are all prone to abuse power consciously or unconsciously it is imperative that there be in place policies that would mitigate this from transpiring. Whether or not such governance policies

[31] Malcolm Webber, "*Check Yourself: Is Your Vision Abusive*". Source: https://www.leadershipletters.com/2019/10/21/check-yourself-is-your-vision-abusive/ [last accessed 26.07.2025].

could enhance accountability depends on the extent to which they address the problem of arbitrary power. Therefore, the key question is whether they establish principles and mechanisms that will circumscribe the exercise of power by the leadership. The policies should establish principles or mechanisms to guide or regulate the exercise of power by those in leadership. The policies must protect others from intimidation and give them security of tenure. They must ensure that the followers will not be victimized or discriminated against for carrying out their duties with integrity, or dismissed, removed from office, demoted in rank or otherwise subjected to disciplinary action without due process of the law of the organization. Followers should be empowered to resist the illegal instructions of their senior leaders.

The governance manual or policy must clearly state that instructions from the leadership that require the followers to make act and may have grave consequences should be in writing. This will ensure that followers are not intimidated into implementing illegal instructions, which are invariably verbal. The governance manual should spell out principles on leadership and integrity that should bind all those in leadership. This will make leaders view themselves as servants of the people who are accountable to the followers for the exercise of the powers delegated to them. This will in turn promote public confidence in the integrity of the leaders.

The manual should have strict rules on conflicts of interest which will assist in preventing the abuse of power. Leaders should behave, whether in public, official life, in private life, or in alliance with other persons, in a manner that avoids any conflict between personal interests and public or official duties. When this happens leader's integrity is questioned and brings the Gospel into dispute. There must be complete compliance to the policies by all in the organization.

Conclusion

The 19th Century British historian, Lord Acton once said, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely".[32] Lord Acton's maxim has been proved true over and over again – including among Christians, unfortunately. All leaders acknowledge that power tends to corrupt but some do nothing about it. Each leader must make it their ambition to

[32] Quoted from https://oll.libertyfund.org/quotes/lord-acton-writes-to-bishop-creighton-that-the-same-moral-standards-should-be-applied-to-all-men-political-and-religious-leaders-included-especially-since-power-tends-to-corrupt-and-absolute-power-corrupts-absolutely-1887 [last accessed 26.07.2025].

discover how they can lessen their own corruptibility and to share the findings, if any, with other leaders.

The proper use of power is the difference between living a life that will be remembered and living a life that didn't have any impact or add value to others. It is as simple as that because as we have seen power is the ability to create change. Life is all about change – positive change. History has shown that the only people who are remembered with fond memories are those who impact the lives of others by changing something. I am yet to come across somebody who is remembered for keeping things exactly the same way they have been, that is to say, for maintaining the reality that is.

Questions for Reflection

1. As you consider your own church/organizations leadership structure, who or which group of people are given special place in your church and why?
2. How would you address structures or rules/policies that favor an elite group or an individual, so that when abuse happens the abuser/s do not even realize it?
3. In which ways do traditional and contemporary cultures reinforce or debilitate power abuse?

Memory Verse

"Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'" (Mt 20:25-28).

Chapter 11: Rest

"Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us." (Maya Angelou)

Introduction

Malambo was highly respected among his colleagues. He was a very successful Executive Director in a Christian ministry that he and his friend Zulu had founded more than 15 years ago. Early in the life of this ministry Zulu developed cancer and within a short time passed away leaving Malambo to give leadership to the organization. Malambo had 6 people in his senior management team working with more than 120 staff spread over in six countries.

Malambo's management team and staff praised and admired him as he would often be the last to leave office and would often work during weekends and holidays. Malambo worked extremely hard which paved the way for the success of the ministry. It was clear that work was a priority for him. It was also not unusual for him to get to the office early and on most nights, stay late. Malambo would also frequently take work home on weekend, too. Not only that, Malambo had a busy traveling itinerary to visit the ministries in other countries. In addition, he sat on a number of numerous Non-governmental Organizations Boards.

In the twelfth year since the establishment of the ministry Malambo developed health challenges. He started experiencing headaches and was diagnosed with High Blood Pressure and he discovered that he was overeating. Malambo's lack of physical exercise and real rest led to fatigue, exhaustion, and burnout. *All Work without rest is a recipe for burnout. Malambo was 'forced' by his health condition to take a rest for almost a year.* As he reflected back then he stated that despite all the work he had put in over the past twelve years, all the value that he provided to others, all the personal and professional success that he collared, he had not taken the time to rest and really enjoy his life and his family. Although Malambo has resumed his duties he is much wiser now and has learned to delegate, outsource and schedule rest and family life in work life.

It is common knowledge that stress can cause physical ailments. Headaches and high blood pressure are common in the lives of those who

overwork. Bulimia which is a response to stress, is another strain on the body caused by overworking because the mind and the body are so intertwined; when one suffers, the other does as well. It is therefore imperative that every leader prioritize mental and physical health as part of a daily routine. Doctors tell us that what the mind harbors, the body manifests and to neutralize the stress of work, sometimes one needs to forget about it and compartmentalize. They recommend that we disconnect the brain and exercise the body. Doctors tell us that physical exertion increases the body's serotonin levels, which improve mood and memory and decrease hunger and depression. It goes without saying that when your body and brain feel well, your performance is good. If you take care of yourself your productivity, effectiveness and attitude are each measurably better.

Biblical Mandate

> "By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done" (Gen 2:2-3 NIV).

As you read this passage above, it is clear that there are two things that are clearly taught here, and the Holy Spirit desires to communicate to the reader. The first is unarguable, in my view, that the seventh day shall be a blessed and holy day. The second is a principle we draw from this is the idea of allowing time for rest in general. There is no superhuman who can keep working and working 24/7, 365 days a year. God intends the human race to exercise self-care in the midst of work.

Obeying this scripture is cardinal because learning to rest is vital, not only for our body and mind but also for our soul. When we obey this Scripture, we enjoy the deep-seated rest of knowing that our life is fully and completely in God's care, and that our true identity is found in belonging to Jesus. Banish the notion that we are the mere sum of our professional successes and failures. It must be stressed that you are not what you accomplish. Your position in your organization or your job title doesn't define you. Your work is not what provides for your needs. God is your ultimate provider, your protector, and your salvation, and he is your one and true deepest rest. Hence, by resting from your work each week, you're publicly declaring to yourself and others that you depend on God's care for you.

I am aware that there could be occasionally times in which it is necessary to keep working during periods of weariness. Often this is caused by

circumstances outside of your control which might dictate that you keep working. When this happens, I suggest that you pray to the Lord to give you strength and wisdom when the best time to rest would be. The Lord Jesus teaches that we can come to him and find rest. However, the rest our Lord is referring to is not just physical rest but emotional, mental, and spiritual rest. It's rest for your soul which we all long for.

This rest cannot be experienced any other way other than first acknowledging your burdens and handing them over to the Lord. Unfortunately, this is the difficult part. You desire desperately to have rest, but it is so hard to let go of the things that mean so much to you. You convince yourself you must be in control as if the more you do, the more you can influence the outcome. It's helpful to remind yourself that as a leader you I can never be the type of leader that God desires you to be unless you remember the role Jesus plays in the whole process. As Jesus' steward you must trust that he will take care of things. The outcome of your ministry is ultimately up to the Lord and not you. Jesus has simply called you to serve him and his cause faithfully. It is him who brings about the fruit, not you.

Song of Solomon 1:6 reads "... and made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected". This is a powerful metaphor that stresses the need for an individual, especially leaders, to care for their own 'garden' i.e. self-care. This is not only a right but a duty of every leader as this is responsible stewardship. There are two main temptations in this regard: first is only to think of yourself and yourself only; second is to never think of yourself and consequently become stressed and burnt out.

It is therefore of paramount importance to have a health theology of work. We are made in the image of a working God who is also a resting God. Work is vital for many reasons, but it should not be an end itself. It is ever so easy to use work for self-gratification instead of seeing work as an instrument to serve God's purposes in your life. I know of some leaders who live for work instead of working for a living. Success is not determined by putting too much effort in the work. The world pushes you to be the best. God is not looking for the world's definition of best. The best or success in God's eyes has to do with one who executes his or her responsibilities with integrity, faithfulness, perseverance, obedience motivated by love for God and for what they do.

Self-Care

We all know that leadership demands long hours and great effort, but rest and relaxation are just as needed as hard work. Leaders who are obsessed

with achievement all the time often feel that every minute of every day must be filled with work; however, that is just not a healthy way to live. Such leaders deceive themselves to think that more always means better. A sensible leader must learn to say no when asked to take on boundless responsibilities. It's not a sin to say "no". In fact, it is commendable for self-preservation or "me-care".

A healthy and effective leader must take time for himself or herself and should not apologize or feel guilty for doing so. As a leader you must always bear in mind that you are a son, a daughter, a mother, a father, a wife, a husband before you are a leader. It is therefore vital that you do not disregard the parts of your live that make you the most human. For any leader, God takes the first priority followed by family and then ministry. Health leaders will primarily focus on their relationship with God. They will not ignore the vital value of prayer and personal study of the Word and live their lives as led by the Holy Spirit. Such leaders will endeavor to have good relationships with their spouse, their children and their parents. This is important because family members provide support and renew to the leader.

The following words attributed to Pete Vargas, Founder and CEO of Advance Your Reach are useful to recall when tempted to constantly keep away from your family because of busyness, "One of the biggest struggles I've been going through in my life lately is how not to be a slave to my business and not have my business be in the front seat and my family be in the back seat...I've come to realize I can win in both areas of my life. I don't have to be a slave to my business for it to be successful. But I [have] learnt so many strategies and techniques and tactics that have helped me gain immense time back, spend more time with my family and loved ones and spend more time doing the things I love doing and still have a successful business without having to overwork."

Consequences of Lack of Self Care

Mwape is the Senior pastor in the 1,000 plus church membership and has ten staff members under him. His wife Jane works as a school head teacher in a government public school. Mwape is praised by his team and church for his excellence and thoroughness in his execution of the responsibilities. He loves his work and often works twelve hours a day. This has been going on for the past four years since Mwape's appointment as Senior pastor. Jane and Mwape hardly have enough quality time with other and with their sixteen- and eighteen-year daughters due to their busy schedule and workload.

One day, looking very sluggish, Mwape confided in me that he was experiencing an acute decrease in his execution of his responsibilities. The quality of work produced was as well getting affected. He talked about how he was making careless mistakes in spellings and generally lacked focus. He mentioned that he was easily losing his temper with both workmates and his family. Mwape lamented that he was finding it hard to get intimate with his wife. Besides all this he had constant headaches and general body weakness. As soon as I heard his story, I knew exactly what Mwape was going through because I had somewhat a similar experience a few years before. Mwape was at the verge of burnout. He was stressed. It is said that when one is stressed the brain experiences undue strain and does not function at its optimum potential. It is for this reason that work output, and quality is compromised since the mind, and the body are very much intertwined. Stress can cause physical ailments such as headaches and high blood pressure.

We live in a in a fast-paced world where some leaders expect immediate and significant results. The temptation to be player in such frenzy is very high. Leaders want to make a name for themselves and their organization. Such leaders are energetic, highly motivated, because the desire to succeed dominates their leadership persona. Often the result is fatigue, exhaustion, and burnout. Someone has said that fatigue, exhaustion, and burnout are the "badges of honor" for those leaders who abandon themselves to work.

Life Rhythms that Help to Enhance Self-Care

Physical Exercises

My doctor friend once told me that what the mind stores, the body manifests – hence it's imperative that leaders prioritize mental and physical health as part of a daily routine. He went on to let me know how physical exercises increase the body's serotonin levels, which in turn improve mood and memory and decrease hunger and depression. Hence, when your body and brain are functioning well you will perform well.

Occasionally, there comes a time when you would need to neutralize the stress of work and forget about it and compartmentalize. You will have to disconnect the brain and exercise the body. Inevitably, when you take care of yourself your productivity, effectiveness and attitude are each measurably well of. Your team will not have to worry about easily agitating you with a careless word or a thoughtless act. Your work environment and your home life become more peaceful.

Relaxation and Unwinding.

It is said by many that the balance of work-life is a myth. However, the need to create a balance between work and relaxation cannot be over emphasized. This is a question of survival – surviving the work life and making oneself productive and useful for a longer period of your productive years. A good leader will take time for relaxation as seriously as he takes his work bearing in mind that he doesn't have to make a choice between a busy professional life and relaxation to be successful. It is recommended a leader plugs in blocks of time for relaxation that complement the blocks of time for work.

A thoughtful and effective leader will create a life that he holds dear that reflects his greatest and dearest priorities. Learning to relax and reboot ensures that a leader stays healthy and productive in his work. Studies have shown that the more tired a leader becomes the more the emotional intelligent and decision-making abilities decrease. Consequently, a wise and successful leader will know how to balance his work and relaxation time.

There are a variety of ways that people unwind. I know one leader who unwinds by reading novels. Another enjoys gardening and loves to take care of his flower garden three times a week after knocking off from office. Hence, you might wish to ask yourself, "What activity might really help me to relax and rest my brain?". Once you have identified it, go for it. Do not feel guilty about it!

However, in no way am I suggesting that creating a work-life balance can be easy. It is self-deception to think that one will ever have a fifty/fifty balance. There will be times when your work life will demand more from you and other times when your self-care will dominate. Whatever, the circumstances, the idea of balancing your rhythm of life must ever be before every leader if they are to avoid burnout and remain productive and effective.

Outsource and Delegate

An effective and productive leader would have mastered the art of delegation and the need to outsource in order to lessen the pressure on themselves and avoid burnout. There are certainly tasks that a leader can outsource and delegate. However, one of the biggest challenges some leaders have is the inability to let go of their own work. Such leaders are so attached to their work and are hence dedicated to completing their own task that they refuse to let other people help. Often these leaders have

convinced themselves that none on their team has the skills or abilities necessary to execute the work as effectively as they would.

It is therefore very important that a leader considers the tasks that take a significant of his work and see whether one on the team can do it more effectively. As a matter of fact, outsourcing and delegating gives others an opportunity to step into their own strengths and grow and develop on their own. It is only an insecure leader who is afraid to delegate. I know of a leader who little confidence in his team and would hardly delegate. But then life has a way of teaching us. One day he was taken ill and was made to be out of work for nearly three months. When he recovered and returned to work, to his amazement the company had made more profit and opened a few more outlets. He had to eat the humble pie.

Take Vacation Time

My pastor friend was afraid of taking vacation time. When I confronted him, his reply was, "I am not so sure that that Church can do without me". I know that my friend is not alone in this category of such thinkers. I refer to such thinkers as people suffering from the 'neurosis of being needed'. This is self-deception and egocentric thinking. It has been established that no one individual is indispensable. Often leaders who advance this argument are insecure.

There are some leaders who are not keen to take a break since they are afraid of the workload they'll come back to. These leaders tend to view vacation time as a luxury they simply can't afford. While it is true that, in some cases, taking vacation creates far more work, yet it is necessary to have it for one's sanity.

Research reveals that there are very important benefits that come with taking vacation time. It has been found that vacation time is important for productivity and helps to achieve the objectives of the organization. Good leaders know that chronic stress without a rest makes them more irritable, less able to sleep well and more likely to be depressed and anxious. Consequently, they take their vacation time as non-negotiable part of their work-life balance.

Vacation time should not be all that complicated to plan if you are intentional and deliberate about it. For example, you don't have to necessarily go to an expensive holiday resort if you cannot afford it. It may be just a drive to a friend's house for a short break. In the Africa context, you may consider visiting your village folk and relax there. a second now to plan your next vacation day. The point is, whatever the case may be, and whatever you can afford to get away with, schedule it in your dairy now and commit to taking this time for your sake's sanity.

Focus on Your Gifts and Activities that 'Give You Life'

The following reflection was part of the letter that my colleague wrote to our leadership team after he had experienced a burnout.

> "As I reflected on how I had arrived at the level of exhaustion that was the reality back in April a number of factors became clear. I believe the exhaustion stemmed primarily from a combination of strong desire to convince people that I could perform and to be seen as responsible and reliable. This then led to a situation of me overestimating my capacity to take on responsibilities that I should have said no to. My inability to say no adequately then led to me spending too much time on activities that drain me, and not enough on the things that give me life, the good works I believe I have been created for. I take full responsibility for this and am determined to manage my time and commitments much more carefully in the future.
>
> To be specific, while I am able to do administration and management tasks reasonably well, they are tasks that drain and sap life from me. Contrary to appearances I am not naturally organized and am not good at remembering and keeping track of details. I have worked hard to develop skills to help me cope, but the complexity of the area leadership has exposed these weaknesses. This has meant I live with a high level of stress worrying about what I am not getting done or forgetting.
>
> I have also become more aware of the price I pay when I am placed in a situation where I have to demonstrate a high level of compassion and empathy. It was only when I slowed down enough to reflect that I fully realized the emotional impact of dealing with Milimo's[33] death and the New Challenge Ministry[34] situation. A key lesson here is that while I cope well under pressure, I need to pay enough attention to dealing with the emotional toll after the event ...
>
> My primary gifting lies in the area of communicating truth in accessible ways, whether through teaching and training, coaching and mentoring, or writing. To be able to do these well requires time to prepare thoroughly.
>
> I do believe I have a contribution to make at the level of strategic planning and problem solving. Too often however this seems to lead to me being asked to take responsibility for implementing which leads back to life-sapping activities."

The above reflection says it all. Often, it's important to say no when given tasks that are beyond your gifting and ability. To accept every task and responsibility just because you are a leader is setting yourself on the trajectory of burnout and frustration.

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33 Name changed.
34 Name changed.

Consider Cutting Back or Rearranging Your Schedule.

Leadership role is a challenging task, and it can really take a toll on you. It can be both energizing and draining psychologically, emotional, physically and spiritually. There are some leaders who feel as if they constantly have to work harder to impress people and to have their ministry grow. Such leaders need to learn to really let go and handed the ministry over to God, allowing him to work in their lives. One way of surrendering the ministry to God is to learn to cut back or rearrange the schedule. This will not be easy but only God can allow it to thrive. When we cut back and spend time alone with God and give him our burdens, God will give us rest.

Right now, there are leaders who are stressed out and unfortunately are not even thinking of cutting down. Does your to-do list allow you to have a time for rest each week? If you have certain days in which you find yourself struggling or it is a constant battle all week long. The I strongly recommend that it's time to cut back on your scheduled activities or rearrange your schedule. When you have cut down you may consider using time to do something you enjoy which may be going out and about or just resting at your home or as an opportunity to connect with the Lord. Remember – Self-care is critical!

Conclusion

Rest empowers a leader to function more effectively with others as well as optimize his or her functions. Lack of proper rest could lead to fatigue, exhaustion, inefficiency, strained work and family relationships and possible burnout. Worst scenario – it could lead to death!

The Bible is very clear that God never meant for us to live nonstop. We saw that right from creation God built work and rest into the architecture of our lives in perfect symmetry. God gave very clear commands; we were created and commanded to work, and we were created and commanded to rest-period. The challenge comes when we don't enjoy both of the two commands in our lives. From God's perspective, both work and rest are sacred. We should not feel guilty when we are resting. Rest is worship – because we honor, acknowledge and obey God's commandment. Obedience is better than sacrifice!

Questions for Reflection

1. What is your understanding of the 'Theology' of rest?
2. When do you make time for self-care during the week?

3. Can you generate a list of at least 10 favorite activities that engender excitement and enhance your ability to unplug and relax?
4. How would you explain your work rhythm. Illustrate when you aware of when to stop, re-evaluate and recharge?
5. How do you think your work rhythm will help you better understand your role as a leader? How will your embracing it enable you to cultivate greater effectiveness?
6. Who will hold you accountable to your work rhythm?

Memory Verse

"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done" (Gen 2:2-3).

Chapter 12: Finishing Well

"Whenever you have taken up work in hand, you must see it to the finish. That is the ultimate secret of success. Never, never, never give up!" (Dada Vaswani)

At the Olympics in Barcelona in 1992, Derek Redmond was prepared for the 400 metres semi-final race. He felt he was in the best shape of his life. He posted the fastest time in the first round and went on to win his quarter-final.

In the 400m semi-final, Redmond started well, but in the back straight about 250 metres from the finish, tragedy struck. Coming around the bend in the track, Derek's hamstring snapped. He hobbled to a halt and then fell to the ground in pain. Initially, he thought he had been shot because the pain was so great. His leg would not function. Stretcher bearers made their way over to him, but Redmond decided he wanted to finish the race. He began to hobble along the track. London's 'The Guardian' newspaper quoted him, "Everything I had worked for was finished. I hated everybody. I hated the world. I hated hamstrings. I hated it all. I felt so bitter that I was injured again. I told myself I had to finish. I kept hopping round. Then, with 100 metres to go, I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was my old man."

Derek hopped on one leg for half a lap before his father came out of the stands to his aid. Jim Redmond barged past security and on to the track to get to his son. Together they finished the race with Derek leaning on his father's shoulder for support. As they crossed the finishing line, the crowd rose to give Derek a standing ovation. "I saw my [son] having a problem and it was my duty to help," Jim Redmond said. "I actually went on the track to try to stop him inflicting further damage to himself. It was Derek's idea. He asked me to get him back in that lane and I offered him a shoulder to lean on."[35] As we all will appreciate, it is one thing to start a race and another to finish it well. There is a clear lesson here for our spiritual life: it is not how you start; it is how you finish. It is easy to start well and then lose your focus and spiritually collapse. It's easy to lose your passion.

I understand that the Greeks had a unique race in their Olympic games. The winner was not the person who finished the race first but the runner

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[35] Quoted from https://www.npr.org/2022/10/04/1126776697/jim-redmond-derek-olympics-sprinter-father-dies [last accessed 26.07.2025].

who finished with his torch still burning. It is good to start well but more important to finish the race well with the flame of our torches still burning for the Lord. Finishing well is imperative in the Christian life.

'Finishing well' may mean different things to different people. For some individuals, it means concluding life with a long comfortable retirement package. For some it may mean coming to the end of your life with a pain-free death. However, when I talk about finishing well, I am referring to following the Lord Jesus Christ to the very end of our lives, accomplishing our God given assignments and then one day hearing those beautiful words from the mouth of the Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant". In other words, finishing well means to be found obedient and faithful until we take our last breath here on earth. We should be quick to remind ourselves that such finishing well is all about God's grace. We start the race by the grace of God, and we finish well by the grace of God. Grace keeps us in the race and also takes us to the end. In the words of John Newton, "'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home". We must never lose sight of this fact. Remember grace is the ultimate explanation for why any of us make it. We are sustained by the grace of God. Our constant prayer and cry before God should be, "Gracious Jesus, give me the grace to keep going and to finish well."

'Finishing *well'* is not an idea typically reserved for the elderly – those approaching the last few years of life. Such a finish is about the trajectory we chose to take now long before we say our last farewells. In other words, we must finish well before we finish first. In practical terms this means that as soon as the red warning lights begin to flash in one critical area of life that is the right time to make amendments or change the trajectory of our lives. Failure to do this may result in us leaving the legacy of a poor finish. Someone has said that the most important part of any story is the ending. It does not make sense to read a book with the aim of simply getting to the middle. Why? Because the ending is the culmination of everything that precedes it. Similarly, in our lives, without a solid ending the value of our lives is discounted and the potential of our influence is diminished. It is therefore imperative to finish well.

The Apostle Paul – An Example of Finishing Well.

My peer mentor once reminded me that there are over one hundred leaders in the Bible, two-thirds of whom did not finish well. The Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of the one third who did, against all odds. Written on a card my friend sent me were the following words which expressed how Jesus finished well:

> "Jesus did all things well while on the earth including dying on the cross in accordance with God's will. Jesus prayed to His Father, 'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.' Jesus knew why He came and stayed true to His purpose. He finished His work, entrusted Himself to the Father and died on the cross, a seeming failure to those closest to Him, but a beloved Son to His heavenly Father. There is no hint of failure in anything He did. By every heavenly standard imaginable, Jesus finished well."

However, I would like to focus on the Apostle Paul, a man, with weaknesses who wrestled against sin just like anyone of us.

"Finishing well" for Paul began long before he penned his final words. It started more than 30 years earlier, after his personal encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. The years after Paul's dramatic conversion were punctuated by difficulties. The Apostle encountered shipwrecks, beatings, prison time, religious opposition, painful personal conflicts, and a lot more. However, by God's grace, he finished the task which he had started long before, even before he began travelling throughout the Roman Empire with the gospel. He boldly stated to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:24, "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace".

In his last days, Paul was arrested and sentenced to death for boldly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Knowing the end of his life was near; Paul wrote these words to Timothy, a young man he had ably mentored and developed: "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2Tim 4:6-8). Paul was not boasting. He was saying that he had remained true to the path God had laid out for him. He had not only lived well but also finished well.

Why was Paul able to finish well? For one thing, Paul did not take the finishing line for granted. He knew his frailty and he confessed, "This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. (1Tim 1:15 NIV). He was aware of his sinfulness and that he constantly waged a battle against the flesh. Again, he confessed:

> "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.

> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing" (Rom 7:15-20).

I am sure these words of the apostle Paul resonate with every leader. We too struggle with the power of sin in our lives. If we are to finish the race, then we must lay aside habitual sin. Hebrews 12:1 encourages us, "... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us". Examine part of this verse, '... the sin that so easily entangles ..." this has to do with the habitual sins in our lives. This is the sin that we often find ourselves facing and to which we often succumb. We must be determined by the grace of God to deal ruthlessly with it lest we be disqualified from finishing the race.

Paul was always aware that it was possible not to finish well in spite of all his hard work for Christ. But he had a safeguard. This is what he kept reminding himself all the time, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1Cor 9:27 NKJV). I believe that every leader has a path God has set out before them and that they will be judged based on how successfully they finish it. Every leader is called to begin, live well in between, and end well. Hence, we can boldly state that success in the Christian life is not measured by how one starts. The most important criterion is whether one is still standing at the end of the race. Commenting on the attitude of finishers and referring to 2 Corinthians, Don Hawkins makes the following comment about Paul:

> "Paul viewed ministry as a treasure given to him by God – yet a treasure to be exercised in a physical body which could accurately be described as 'just a jar of clay' (2Cor 4:7). Surrounded by adversity (4:8), Paul was nonetheless not ready to give in to the pressure. He frequently couldn't figure out what to do, but he didn't despair. Pursued by his foes, he had not been abandoned by God. Tripped up from time to time, he was nonetheless not permanently sidelined. His hope for the future was rooted in a confident, present faith in a risen, living Christ (4:13, 14). In view of this, Paul viewed adversity as an opportunity to experience God's grace and bring Him glory (4:15). He was able to repeat his earlier resolution: 'For this cause we do not give up'."[36]

[36] Don Hawkins, *Never Give Up –The Incredible Payoff of Perseverance*, (Lincoln: Back to the Bible, 1992), 46.

Some Characteristics of Those Who Finish Well

I once saw the following written on a placard on the wall of my friend's office:

> "Till you cross the winning line, do not stop running. Keep going, till you finish the race. If you can no longer run, walk; and keep walking till you cross the winning line. If you can no longer walk, crawl; but whatever the case, finish the race. Do not stop running till you cross the winning line."

On April 8th, 2018, during the Hannover Marathon, in Germany, Kenyan Runner Michael Kunyuga was on the verge of winning the marathon when his body seemed to give up and he crumpled and fell just before the finishing line. However, Kunyugu was determined to make it to the finish – he could not give up at that stage of the race. After falling to the ground, Kunyuga summoned every last ounce of energy in his body and began to crawl frantically toward the finishing line. He succeeded and finished the race in second place, narrowly avoiding a catastrophic end to his race. It was almost as if Kunyugu had lived by the placard on the wall. He had not travelled thousands of miles from his mother country of Kenya to Germany to start the race. He went there to finish the race – and he finished it against all odds.

The Bible calls upon Christians to run the race set before them with endurance (Heb 12:1-3). Their life on earth is a race to heaven. They must train for it just as any athlete trains. Spiritual stamina and muscles must be developed so that their endurance is increased. Christians have both desert and mountain-top experiences in their earthly pilgrimage. When they go through hard experiences, they will need to be ready for them. For example, a desert dweller who runs out of water will dehydrate and weaken. Similarly, a leader going through a 'spiritual desert' experience must continue to pray and study the Scriptures even if the Word does not give encouragement and guidance. The living word of God is what strengthens us and enables us to negotiate those dry riverbeds in our spiritual journey with God.

I remember watching mountaineers on the 'National Geographic' TV Channel and heard the commentator talk about how much the climbers have to endure, how they must persevere, be determined, and use a lot of skill to reach the summit. Just like mountain climbers, determination, perseverance, and endurance are all helpful traits to have when a Christian is facing personal trials. The commentator went on to explain that even the most advanced and mature climber can make a silly mistake or take an

unnecessary and thoughtless risk that ends in sudden death. As I watched these climbers celebrate when they reached the summit, I compared their experience with that of a Christian who may also be filled with pride when they reach the summit, whatever that summit might be. It is easy to become proud once you have reached the summit; but pride can cause a horrific fall. The Bible says pride goes before a fall. The characteristics of those who finish well are set out here.

They Are Not Ministry-Centred, Nor Anthro-Centred but Christ-Centred

The Bible exhorts Christians to be Christ-centered. Hebrews 12:1-3 says:

> "[...] let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:1-3).

The good finishers are people who are ever mindful that they have been saved by grace through faith and this is a gift from God. This causes them to live a life of gratefulness and appreciation to God. Christ is their everything and their reason for living. **Intimacy with Christ is at the core of those who finish well.** They do not just give mental assent to the Lordship of Christ, but it is lived out in their daily lives as they relate to Christ, His people and His world. They have a vibrant ongoing dynamic relationship with the Lord Jesus – a constant renewal. Are they perfect? Far from it. However, they are so sensitive to sin that the moment they are overtaken by sin they immediately confess it and repent. They keep a short account with God as they deal with those weaknesses and sins that entangle them. They are as sensitive to sin as the eye is to any foreign body. Their eyes are fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of their faith.

It is ever so easy to be preoccupied with building our ministries. There is nothing wrong in building and developing ministries, but we need to watch out that this is not done at the expense of our relationship with Christ. Christ is more interested in our relationship with him than he is in the work we do for him. Then, there is also the temptation of doing ministry so that other people can applaud us and acknowledge our services. Playing to the gallery has been a killer of many ministries. Today there are many voices that make demands on us – making suggestions and directing our work. Donors and

sponsors are welcome partners who should be appreciated but if we are not careful the donor voices can easily change our God-given vision.

They Stay Focused

Life has a habit if throwing things at us, often at unexpected moments. There are also numerous voices calling out to us such that it is ever so easy to lose focus on what really counts. There is pressure to play to the gallery. In ministry we are often confronted with internal and external pressure to compromise the vision or mission that God has given us. These pressures may come from donors or partners or even from politicians. Pressures may also come from the sovereign God as he seeks to accomplish his purposes in and through us. What will ensure that we maintain our vision and are not derailed is our 'focus factor'. That should remain solid. We must be focused first on the Lord and then on the mission that he has given to us. We must also focus on the eternal rewards. For example, when the apostle Paul was tempted to give up in ministry due to untold suffering that he experienced he focused beyond his current circumstances and viewed life from eternity's perspective, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal". (2Cor 4:17-18) Yes, we must focus on the 'big picture' even though it does not make sense to us when we go through trials and difficulties. One day in the glory we shall see the complete picture and thank the Lord and give him the glory for the unpleasant experiences that he permitted us to go through.

We must also know the task, the call, the gifts, and the assignment that the Lord has graciously given to us. We must understand our purpose in that given moment. As one of my peers once said, "People who finish well possess clarity of purpose and a constancy of purpose". I like the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3:13, "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But *one thing* I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead [...]." where he lays emphasis on 'one thing' that he does. It is ever so easy to be distracted by one hundred and one other things if we are not focused. "You must dance to the beating of your own drum and not of your neighbor's", we say in Africa.

They are Disciplined

Discipline is of paramount importance in every individual's life. A disciplined person is often successful because he or she is guided and controlled

by certain rules, norms and values. I like the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

> "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1Cor 9:24-27 NKJV).

Here, we are given the picture of a runner. This athlete must compete in such a way as to win the prize. To do this will require that the athlete be disciplined and so he must be self-controlled and self-regulated. In other words, the runner will demonstrate his skill through perseverance, tenacity, self-control and resistance to temptations and distractions. The Apostle Paul expresses a similar thought when he writes, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2Tim 4:7-8).

Discipline does not come easily. It requires hard work and a determination not to compromise or take the easy way out. The easy way out may just be your exit passage from your mission.

A disciplined life may include abstinence such as fasting, silent retreats as well as those disciplines of engagement such as prayer, study of God's word, spiritual brokenness and confession. Discipline must arise out of our gratitude toward the grace of God. However, it is not the actions flowing from a disciplined lifestyle that will enable us to finish well but the grace of God using these spiritual disciplines.

They Are Teachable

When some leaders rise up the ladder in Christian ministry they tend to develop a very unhealthy attitude. They see themselves as past learning from others, especially if this takes place within the context of being rebuked and admonished. This kind of spirit has led to many a minister falling from grace. All leaders, regardless of their status and length of service in ministry, must embrace a teachable spirit. To be teachable is to have a humble disposition and be open to rebuke or admonishment – to be willing and ready to be corrected and guided. We are all lifelong students as we read, research, watch, listen, practice and serve. We learn from life and

from others and most importantly from the Holy Spirit. A person who is unteachable is one who has become stale and stopped growing and will soon become irrelevant.

In some cultures, such as the African, it is often believed that wisdom is the preserve of the senior and most experienced and therefore the juniors cannot counsel or teach their seniors. I believe this is a misleading. There is so much wealth in listening to the advice of others regardless of their social status, education and even their shorter experience. Proverbs 11:14 says: "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. (KJV). No one person has the monopoly of wisdom. We are all limited by our own experiences, personalities, education, spirituality, and back-ground, so much so that we need the perspective of others to give us a holistic view of the issues we face.

They Have Good Mentors, Coaches and Intercessors

The English metaphysical poet, John, Donne, once stated that no man is an island. We are created to live and thrive in community. While it is true that as individuals, we must put our faith in Christ to be his followers, we are not meant to live in isolation independent of other Christians. We belong to the Body of Christ and are to be willing to support others and be supported as well. What this means is that we must have a network of people around us who will be our mentors and to whom we make ourselves accountable. We should be willing to make our lives transparent especially to our spiritual mentors – share with them our spiritual struggles, our temptations, our marital issues, and ministry challenges. Knowing our strengths and weaknesses is essential. When we know who we are, we can be comfortable making decisions about what we want to do and where we want to do it.

There is sense in which a leader must deliberately make himself or herself accountable to those that they minister among. The apostle Paul said to the Corinthians (2Cor 6:3, 11-13), "We put no stumbling block in anyone's path ... We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange – I speak as to my children – open wide your hearts also". Paul's life was an open book, and he encouraged the Corinthians to be as open with him and his team as he and his team were open to them. He gave permission to the Corinthians to speak into his life – to be open with their lives as well. Paul had a wide network of people – ministry partners as well as those he ministered to whom he allowed to strengthen his spiritual health.

Christian ministry is a constant spiritual battle. As we seek to be used of God to depopulate hell and equip the Body of Christ Satan is agitated and will swing into action to attack the minister and the ministry. Biblical and Church history is punctuated by incidents of spiritual attacks. The apostle Paul prayed for the Church in many places, and he also asked local churches to pray for him. For example, in Ephesians 6:19-20 he urges the Ephesian believers: "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should." I cannot over-emphasis the need to have a wide network of prayer partners if we are to finish well.

Keep Pressing On

In Philippians Chapter 3 the apostle reflects on his credentials as a Jew and confesses that these in themselves are nothing compared with the blessings of being in and knowing Christ. He promises himself to press-on come what may and finish the task God has given him. He writes:

> "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but *I press on* to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, *I press on* toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12-14).

In other words, the apostle was resilient. But what is resilience? It is an individual's capacity to respond to pressure and the demands of the mundane. Resilience is one virtue that people who finish well always possess, just like Kunyuga, the Kenyan marathon runner.

For many of us who are in the so called full-time Christian ministry, our ministries have become the number one stressor in our lives. In our contemporary and post-modern world, the work culture and pattern have changed compared with that of the earlier modern world. Today, ministry is extremely taxing because we are hyper-connected and responsive to work at anytime, anywhere. The demands of ministry put a lot of pressure on us requiring, as they do, quick responses, never-ending virtue meetings (e.g. meetings via computers and smart phones) and often constant travels. This highly demanding work culture is a good recipe for stress with its risk of burnout. This makes it more important than ever for those in Christian ministry to come up with resilience skills to deal effectively with our work pressured culture.

Building Resilience in Order to Finish Well

I recall listening to a radio program where the panelists were discussing how to keep your sanity when under pressure in your workplace. I would like to borrow what they stated were the skills that can make one finish well. They said that resilience is built by *attitudes, behaviors* and *social support systems*. Our attitude should be to always bear in mind that it is God we are serving, and that ministry is his work not ours. However, we should also bear in mind that we will give an account of how we have managed his work as stewards. This attitude should keep us levelheaded in our service for the Lord. Behavior is informed by our character. Christian character will result in good Christ-honoring behavior. As observed already we need to have a strong social network of spiritual supporters for us to be resilient. Knowledge of these three factors will also help us to stay balanced and to manage strong or difficult emotions as well as free us from feeling overwhelmed and stressed at work. However, not all stress is bad. Stress that creates distress is not good, but the stress that motivates us to be and do our best and drives us to perform at our summit is to be welcomed.

Barry Winbolt suggests the following:

1. Cherish social support and interaction. Good relationships with family and friends and others are vital. Being active in the wider community also helps.
2. Treat problems as a learning process. Develop the habit of using challenges as opportunities to acquire or master skills and build achievement.
3. Avoid making a drama out of a crisis. Stress and change are part of life. How we interpret and respond to events has a big impact on how stressful we find them.
4. Celebrate your successes. Take time at the end of each day to review what went well and congratulate yourself. This trains the mind to look for success rather than dwelling on negativity and 'failure'.
5. Develop realistic life goals for guidance and a sense of purpose. Do something each day to move towards them. Again, small is beautiful; one small step amid the chaos of a busy day will help.
6. Take positive action. Doing something in the face of adversity brings a sense of control, even if it doesn't remove the difficulty.
7. Nurture a positive view of yourself. Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps to build resiliency.

8. Keep a realistic perspective. Place challenging or painful events in the broader context of lifelong personal development.
9. Practice optimism. Nothing is either wholly good or bad. If we allow our thinking to dictate how we view something it will take over. Make your thinking work for your benefit, rather than letting it stymie you with doubt or by seeing only the bad side.[37]

Conclusion

I believe that it is the desire of all who read this book is to finish well. You are ever renewing your energy and focus on finishing well. There are many people out there who are enthusiastically watching you run the race set before you. And you know that finishing well does not depend on you – it is the work of grace. We must attribute our faithfulness to the grace of God and nothing else. However, you do possess human responsibility which only you and not God can exercise because God has given you the grace for it. It is not God's fault when a Christian fails to finish well. It is entirely their responsibility. You and I know of people in the Bible and in our contemporary world who began following Christ, intent on faithfulness and fruitfulness but alas failed to finish well. We must be aware that there are a variety of reasons why we may fail to finish well. For some of us these will be a few wrong decisions that we made and for others it may be the amassing of many minor choices that slowly but surely moved us away from Christ. The Scriptures exhort us to stay alert and on guard, faithful and vigilant to the very end. We are to "[...] hold on to our courage" (Heb 3:6) and "[...] hold out the word of life" (Phil 2:16). We must "[...] press on [...] to win the prize (Phil 3:14). Let us not allow ourselves to become bad statistics.

Questions for Reflection

1. What actions have you put in place (or will put in practice) to ensure that you don't have a poor finish?
2. Who is a Bible character or someone in Church or contemporary Christian history could be your example of someone who finished well? What do you attribute their finishing well to?

[37] Barry Winbolt, "9 ways to improve your resilience at work". Source: http://www.barrywinbolt.com/resilience-at-work/ [last accessed 12.08.2025].

3. If the devil was to tempt you, what area of your life do you think he could use to make you fall? How are you going to safeguard yourself against this?

Memory Verse

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:1-2).

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I know that I am weak, but you are strong. I know myself that on my own I cannot stand. You see and know my weaknesses. Please reveal to me my own vulnerability and weaknesses and help me to confess my sins. Give me a thirsty and a hunger for your righteousness and holiness. Amen.

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Many who desire to be leaders have no desire to face the challenges and discomfort of leadership. They love the authority, power, title, entitlement and sometimes the razzmatazz that comes with leading. Those that have been truly called to lead in ways that honor the Lord, will inevitably experience various challenges that accompany leadership such as pain, disappointment, betrayal, loneliness, rejection and all the ugly stuff that people throw at them. Challenges and leadership are two sides of the same coin. Sometimes these challenges may be self-perpetuated – but whatever the case, ministry is not always pretty. This book highlights some areas in leadership that many grapple with and suggests practical and biblical ways of responding to them.



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