

## LEADERSHIP

The preparation to become a leader is not easy.

Like Jacob, in Genesis 32:22-32, God's leaders must do their fair share of wrestling with God. This struggle was Jacob's fruitless endeavour not to give his will to God. It resulted in a dislocated hip and a new name. Jacob failed to have his way. He would walk life differently than he did in the past. Losing this struggle with God changed his inner nature, his soul. Thus he was given a new name depicting his new unique character.

True leaders will not circumvent this same process. They will learn much through the battle with God. Yes, leaders fight with God. It is not like the conflict found on a battlefield. It is the tension of a father telling his child what to do. The child resists, but ultimately their wayward will is broken. This submission to Father results in wise leadership and Heavenly perspectives. The key is, God is the creator, and we are the created. Losing the battle of dominant willfulness has opened the way for God to do great things in and through His leaders. Their walk now is more in line with Heavenly order.

When people enter into discussions on trying to figure out who God is, it is called apologetics. God's leader does not spend much time in this endeavour as it often leads to unimportant conclusions and division.

Inquiring about spiritual things is prominent in the hearts of many. In the world, there is a seeking of something more profound than words spoken; the inner quietness and confidence found in some leadership draw searchers close, past all rhetoric to the reality they are inside.

There are no judgements toward anyone that would turn them away. Leaders should know full well that they, too, are a mixture of gold and clay. This humility and mercy are welcoming to those who struggle and are ashamed of past deeds.

But to the chronic seeker, never really wanting a final answer, the leader is perplexing. They are, to them, an enigma. Their life emanates that Truth has found them.

To the analytical brilliance of the Jew, mature leaders bring both confusion and intrigue. They are the brother of Jacob. The encounter with these wise and knowledgeable men and women is perplexing. To believe them would mean a Jewish person would find a disconnect of ancient teachings. They would understand the Messiah is alive in the embodiment of both the Old and New Testaments. The inner peace that the leader possesses is like a magnet, drawing them beyond apologetics to God's Mystery. They become with the gentiles the new creation.

In the struggle to live out the raw deal given to him and his mother by the patriarchs of God Abraham and his wife, Sarah (Genesis 16), the leader's other brother is Ishmael. Meeting the leader, Ishmael encounters a deep inner peace and, most of all, total acceptance by God.

The prostitute finds a father.

The homeless and fatherless find a family with those who hang out with these leaders.

Inner prison walls in broken hearts begin to crumble. The leader's church family is a safe refuge.

Dark pasts give way to new vistas of Hope bathed in healing Light.

Adults become reborn as their damaged inner child experiences the expressive freedom found only in unconditional Love.

No longer fooled, these leaders are aware that life is both love and war. Dying to themselves many times has prepared their hearts for complex tasks. This painful, ongoing process is the secret of being trusted by God. This "schooling" results in knowing when and how to share such Gems of life-changing Revelation.

They do not just seek the Power found in Christ's resurrection; they also embrace the unity of being one in Jesus' suffering. The Lord walks with them and in them. Both, together, grieve at the enormous suffering in the world. They also suffer sadly over the distance from God's Heart the church can be. Together they see many who want just a better life on earth with a splattering of miracles to convince them God is with them. The concept of an eternal condition based on the degree they have made Christ their Lord does not resonate enough to warrant the necessary inner change. Regretably, there is a lasting loss.

To understand the mystery of death to our own will is a gift given only to the weak and hungry. In our weakness, Christ's strength is made mature in us. Others are content to set up their church in what the Apostle Paul called the elementary teachings in Hebrews, chapter 6. Camping there demands less of them. Their words, "I want more Lord" is on their lips but not in their heart. Like a boat secured to the dock, complete freedom is not experience.

The leader's journey is inward and forward. They learned to live in the realm of the natural and the unseen. Counting the cost has been done. They have become a willing bondsman to Love. They long for the fresh wind of Heaven; they want to be close to the Father. They want to feel His very breath, the deep embrace of His Love.

Always in want for clearer vision. The leader is not looking to build in the temporal because they know the church is not constructed by human hands but by Heaven's Love and Power. They know the people they lead are God's "living stones." Not natural brick and mortar. The world will see there is a place on earth where Love and Honour exist. This building is the same city Abraham longed for, the New Jerusalem extending from the earth's soil into Heaven.

A leader knows that they and the church are God's address to His heart. They desire that all would not just do the talk but also walk the walk. They want people to know that they are a friend of God not because of good deeds earned but solely because of Mercy. They are earthly

ambassadors of the Heavenly Kingdom, the place where tears become transformed into joy and yokes are easy, and burdens are light. Being changed from a desire for the temporal to Divine purpose, they now live for others.

Heaven is for the present as well as the future. The reality of God's dwelling with us is needed now in this chaotic life. The prayer that is always in the leader's heart is, "Your Kingdom come, and will be done on the earth as it is in Heaven." Mathew 6:9-14.

This leader does not look to many camps of man to find rest and fellowship. They love the people but to participate in disputes over elementary doctrines and rules is not for them or the people under them.

Guild cages unknowingly formed with carefully tailored bible words restrict people from a life that should lead to freedom and not into religious bondage. Results of control are the loss of adventure, exploration, free expression and a loving community. The world, the flesh and the devil, are always lurking at the church door, ready to pick up believers burned by legalism. AN EAGLE MUST FLY, OR IT WILL DIE. THE EAGLE KILLS THE SERPENT.

A True leader carries within himself the fear that he too can put God in a box. Being aware of this has made him wise and also trusted. He knows one can be sincere but also sincerely wrong.

True humility is when you realize that the Word of God must shape us and not the other way around.

An unredeemed or tested imagination often distorts God's plan for humanity. It will build a structure in the soul that makes one's walk through life unbalanced.

Often a leader must dismantle in churches what others have taught and lead. Receiving teaching is like eating food. Food can be excellent or poisonous. Wrong principles implemented in the past must be replaced by what is right. Giving healthy leadership on top of erroneous teaching will bring confusion. Correction and rebuilding are not a simple deal. Utmost Wisdom and Patience are required when building on or adjusting the foundations of past leaders.

The fear of missing out on the Lord's proven ways is what keeps humble leaders close to the Lord. They know they, too, could be in the place where God knocks on their door, and they do not recognize Him. For this reason, they embrace God's discipline even though it seems too severe at the time. They know correction will save their lives and those they lead. Most of all, it pleases the Father in Heaven that we do run from the painful adjustments needed to bring His Kingdom deeper into our hearts and to a needy world. Righteousness, Peace and Joy in the Holy Spirit are the outcomes. To impart this to their people is called Ministry.

The True leader is often an outsider; at least, this is the view of them by many established in different "brands" of doctrines. To stand alone is a challenge. They know that joining these

groups and coming into agreement with principles you do not fully agree with just because you do not want to be alone means a loss of fellowship with the Father.

The leader becomes an avid observer. He is a spiritual father. He looks to see if people are growing into healthy Sons and Daughters. Many migrate from other churches to be with him and the people he leads. Because of this, the accusation spreads that he has "stolen" people from other churches.

Church numbers often become a sense of pride. Also, not being able to keep members mean a loss of finances. Instead of questioning why people left their congregation, they are angry at the church that took them in.

In his heart, a true church father grieves for many shepherds and the people under them. A crucial imbalance is prevalent when the adherence to interpretations of God's Word and doctrine supersedes love and care for one another. These unbalance faults found groups and denominations could also happen to any leader. Usually, it is pride that hides this. Tithes and offerings of devoted people supply incredible amounts of energy and finances, promoting religious and dead traditions.

Two of the primary faults in churches and denominations are to be too liberal or too legalistic. Liberalism follows societies' flow. "God is Love, so ALL things are good." There is little regard for scriptural standards or morals that produce healthy life.

The other extreme, legalism, see many things they perceive as immoral. The problem is there are often no biblical bases for much of their assumptions. Legalistic churches in the extreme are known more for what they don't do than what they do. Neither of these polarised groups brings the joy and peace God wants to give. We often do not see it, but legalism begins to rob people of the good qualities of life that are not evil, and it becomes a major stumbling block in keeping people from staying in churches. Liberalism wanting everyone included also is blind and, in the end, is mass confusion and often secular government control.

The love for the Bible and the uncompromising approach to holiness always has been the cruel edge that has destroyed many beautiful people who love God. I know this sounds contradictory but obeying the law saves no one it can only condemn, pointing to failure.

The law itself is perfect, converting the soul. (Psalm 19 7-14) Jesus obeyed it, living as a human. In His obedience to Heaven's law, he transforms all who come to Him. He removed our separation from the Father and delivered us into His Kingdom. No man could do it, so all humanity was locked out. We were all condemned because of our fall in Adam. But God came to our rescue. In His incredible desire to have us with Him in His Glory, He sent His own Son to do it for us. A new Royal title for Christ became established. He is always the Son of God. For the first time, He is also the Son of Man and still is at the throne of His Father in Heaven. His Love, Life and resurrection broke the ceiling barrier to the Father's heart caused by man's fall and opened Heaven to all humanity. The gift of eternal life with Him is "the gift that never ends.

Love motivated God, and it is His Love that keeps us not earthly personal willpower. Jesus gives to us all His cross has accomplished. We have been made one in the very God Head. Jesus brought us in as a complete family member with all the benefits that He has in the same position! All is because God loves us.

Legalism has a way of tainting this incredible reality. Liberalism often bypasses the Cross. We need the forgiving Blood of Jesus to cleanse us from sin is often thought of as an insult to their wisdom. Forgiveness from God loses itself to an all-inclusiveness approach to religion not requiring biblical morality.

Often, these errors are lived in by the kind and sincere leaders. That is the problem. Passionate people are right. Right?

Eagles in a cage smell. Their beauty is all but gone. The Bible so wonderfully tells us this, "To them(us) God gave the Power to be His Sons And Daughters." It is the very Power of Jesus that brings us into Him, and from there, we live in Him in this world. This Grace is an unmerited gift we did not deserve but was given to us regardless. This Grace comes from God's Heart.

It is religion when we are forced to something when the Grace is not in the church to accomplish it. Many who break out of this invisible religious confined are called "backsliders." If all the people who left church came back, there would not be enough buildings and colosseums to hold them. I believe that most leave churches because Grace is not there to keep them. Not everyone who leaves a church is a die-hard rebel.

In different degrees, we ALL have failed in some way to legalism and liberalism. The leader is well acquainted with their past failings but has desired to learn from them.

It is much easier to bring people to the Lord, yet often to get them to maturity is where most churches fail. Numbers grow. Finances grow. BUT are the people growing? It is Love that builds the people. The True leader has been around long enough to see that much church growth is just the "shuffling of the deck." Church members are going from one church to another. He knows what most of them are looking for is to be loved and to love. The greatest thing that makes a healthy church is this Love for one another. It is the Power that makes us radiant. Love is the most significant attribute that keeps us from falling away. Love draws people to God. It is what is to welcome people and to keep them. The doctrine has little to do with this.

The leader knows there must be a desire for "oneness" within the individual church, and among all churches or confusion will be the unintended witness to the world.

God's leader cannot help but bring the high mountains down and lift the valleys for longing unity among all believers. Because of this, he/she is both despised and loved.

Most of the blood on the swords of the church is not the enemy's blood. It is family blood. One only has to go to the internet to see the squabbling and infighting that groups think they have the whole truth.

God's leader is an enigma, a maverick to the natural mind and those who need to fit people into categories. It is because they have no definable "brand." They are not like Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals or other known denominations and independent churches. They are an unknown quality. To many, this is disconcerting and is a reason for suspicion. Defining God in familiar boxes for a secure etched-in-stone definition does not work. Leaders and their people are to mature in God's Presence. Who can define God? Is it not God who defines us. To "brand" themselves by an experience religious groups had at one time in their history box them in the confide of that experience and alienate them from other groups or denominations with a different experience. The often unintended result is one group feeling more spiritual than another.

Leaders understand the broken. In quiet strength, the reflection of Hope is their gift, and they continually fight the war for others' rest in God. The needy bring their pain to the invisible altar of their heart and church. Folk soon encounter peace and the release from anxiety among the church people under a good leader.

There are also the prayers of the Heavenly Hosts of by-gone saints backing the ministry of God's men and women. They are around God's throne. These prayers are for the release of Wisdom, Revelation, Authority, and Deliverance spoken by the servants on earth.

Confessions of sins are kept confidential. The church is a safe place. There is no gossip. In this church, people learn to face life's challenges because of an "unearthly" encounter with Love and Mercy. These qualities are within the congregation and not just the leaders. There is an enabling atmosphere so that the hidden inner person can come to the front before others without fear of rejection.

People want to know what motivates a wise leader. Always looking to the horizon for the new dawn, seeing the future and not embroiled in the past is intriguing. What do they see in God's Spirit? How do they make the invisible tangible? Wishing to have their eyes and own their mystery, some want it without the cost. There is a price to understand the sweet mysteries of God. He tells His secrets only to His friends. Some desire only the easy path when the demanding course brings us to Truth and Freedom.

"Undefinable" leaders bear the misunderstandings and distorted words of those thought to be wise. Attempt to define these men and women of God steals some from their growth and maturity when they should be looking to God for their perfection and tending their flock. But the saying is, "if you have not got personal maturity, you can't give it away." Not all who believe themselves to be leaders are ready.

Criticisms, often based on jealousy and envy, will be returned with forgiveness and blessing. But other leaders who enquire with pure hearts are welcomed. Wisdom and Revelation are shared as new bonds take place. Different churches learn to Love each other and sacrifice for each other. The world sees a positive witness to the Love of God among them.

At times, leaders must endure unique sufferings in their souls. It is from a great desire to know Him more. Fasting and praying is part of their life to get closer—this denial brings them to Substance and Truth. The leader wants only to be in God's Love, Peace and Joy. They see the invitation as a death to self. Transformation exerts its self ruthlessly through all inner thoughts and motives of the old nature. Bringing forth the fruit of Righteousness is a wrestling match. The unredeemed nature must give up its treasures as the soul surrender its ownership. There is a prize to those who endure this walk. It is life in the Father's Heart and His Goodness in the land of the living.

The strength of leaders is in the quietness and confidence of Faith. Many others will not understand—even the busyness of saving souls can lead to forgetting personal fellowship with God. God's leaders of this new era that is now emerging realize that pressures can steal the simple sincerity of life-saving Faith in God. The economy, family, locked-out churches, and all things related to covid 19 have produced some uniquely stressful situations. Church doctrines have always impeded unity, a unity most needed in this time. It is only five percent of biblical doctrines that have destroyed peace among God's people, and none of these principles are cardinal to True Faith in God and the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is Bible scholars who have fostered much of this. I say this being a Bible college graduate from a prominent evangelical denomination. After the Reformation of Martine Luther, some 35,000 Christian denominations and religious groups have followed. Is this confusing? All say they love Jesus but few get along with one another. Should this not be disturbing? Few seem to embrace this and desire to change this upsetting witness to the world.

Secular politics have now imploded upon the church. Increasing divisions even more. In my view, the greatest of sins is disunity. It comes down to this, "the iniquity in me can't get along with the sin in you." This reality is scapegoated by saying, "it is a doctrinal issue."

Some leaders have lost sight of the suffering of the people under today's enormous weight. Jesus's greatest prayer was that we would be one. Many church leaders have alienated themselves from other groups over doctrinal difference, taking their flock with them. Now covid has brought isolation and loneliness to their people. Is this the consequence of independence? If these divisions were not prevalent, unity would alleviate much of the suffering. There would be more care for one another. Jesus said, "no greater Love is when a brother would lay down his/her life for another." We are caught unprepared for today. We must ask the question, what have we built over the last many decades? Correct doctrine is not a cure for loneliness.

The leaders now emerging will lead by example. They will be a child of God; first, a brother or sister next and lastly have titles and gifts. Above all, any leader who does not have the Father's heart will risk losing everything. If anything, what has become very clear with this covid deal is the church was unprepared. One has to ask the questions, what have leaders been building over the last decades? Have they built small empires around themselves and their denominations?

Have they come between Christ and the people with their charisma? Why are many at a loss when they can't sit under the preacher? Is God not with them in the home? Have leaders made people more dependent on them than Jesus? It takes courage to face these questions. Leaders who don't change will be put on a shelf until they give in the transformation to obedience. The future challenges could be worse than covid. Strong but broken leaders are coming to the plate to replace the many God must sideline.

Doctrines leadership that lacked the Father's heart have shown themselves void of sustaining Grace through testing times.

Yes, there will be more storms on the horizon. God is going to surprise many with His provision. Some of the most unlikely men and women will be brought to the front to lead by example.

Leadership's priority is by example showing the people how to be friends with one another, cultivating Love and Trust. Deep Friendship, Love and Loyalty draws in the lonely, isolated world into the family of God. Jesus said to his disciples, "I do not call you slaves that do the work; I call you my friends." Leaders must develop deep friendships with their people and not just with other pastors and leaders.

The most significant church transition once again is leadership called by God to serve and not take. Leaders whose identity is what they do rather than who they are is coming to an end. Full transparency is rare. I understand this. It takes real courage to know who you are and not live in pretence. When leadership's greatest Love is the work in the church, they are not servants. Strangely, they are in an adulterous affair. Their Bathsheba is the ministry. Over dedication to ministry is not an admirable sacrificial attribute, but rather it shows addiction. When the preaching and status of being in charge, honoured and praised are most important, the leader has lost themselves to what an old friend coined as "The Hollywood syndrome." When a leader identifies with a title, they will ultimately end up as a controller, not servants. Like any addiction, they will need more. They will find themselves jealous when someone outshines them; it is a significant sign that they do not have the required fathers' hearts. When a leader gets more out of ministry than being at home with his wife, he/she is open to some of the most dangerous temptations. Many have fallen into adulterous affairs because of this.

Years ago, I heard the average stay of a pastor in the United States was three years. The first year they are praised as really something. In the second year, they and the congregation are beginning to show their true selves with all the problems. In the third year, the leader leaves for another church to pastor, or rather not to pastor. This third year is the beginning of growth and change, but they escape. A new leader comes in and does the same.

Tragically, the people are played with by a system that does not recognize this abuse or, worse, thinks it is normal.

This "man-made" leadership can only produce human-made prodigies. When a leader is "driven," it is a bad example. The church takes on the leader's drive to fulfill his vision. Young



people who want to go into church work will emulate the leader. The result is a zeal without Wisdom. Such leadership will not understand the church is to serve the family and not the other way around. Driven pastors often burn out the dedicated members of the congregation. The saving of souls, tithing, spending long hours in church work and working full time at the factory or office is far too much for most people.

Often it is pride in the leader that burns the candle at both ends and leads others to do the same.

Pride sunk the Titanic. There is an iceberg awaiting all church captains. Without humility, they will see the people sink beneath the waves. Many leaders have been too proud to take any blame for how they sunk their ship—a lamentable reality.

A humble leader's life and message call for desert times. A necessary time for all to have hearts tested. It is where motives are exposed and repented of, and the soul refreshed. There is never a crowd here. The need to be alone with God is often clouded. The tasks of ministry for God supersede the need to be alone with Him. They miss out on the affirmation in inherited Sonship that happens in dry places. They do not realize their first call is to please God with a Father and Son relationship. All else is a by-product of this relationship. Church ministry without this relationship results in hollow words spoken without personal experience. The house ends up being built on sand and not solid rock. The desire to be away from the fray is not for them because they do not know how to be alone. They don't know how to be quiet. They don't know who they are in Father Love.

The facade of who they think they are needs constant affirmation. A "rush" is in accolades, being the champion and giving good performances. There is an attempt to be imitators of past heroes seeing only the accomplishments and not seeing the sacrifice.

Often the congregations are at the mercy of living vicariously through the single vision of one man. They take praise and honour to themselves. Those who covered the finances and did the "grunt work," sacrificing time from family and other responsibilities, receive little credit. The leader brings the reports of "his" success to the gathering of leaders. It is his show and tells sessions. He is applauded by the self-propelled, and they discuss how to market the expansion of God's Kingdom.

I need to say that we have all failed in church ministry and life in general in many ways. No one can throw a stone at another. But if our failings are again "shoved under the carpet," we will only repeat history. There will be more suffering. Most of all, it hurts God our Father.

The leaders emerge out of the desert places that are often lonely and hidden. They have become the message. There is a different fragrance that comes with them. Like a meadow not spoiled by the industry and business of concepts developed at religious round tables dissecting doctrine, conceiving new earthly plans to bring the Heavenly Kingdom. When he speaks, he makes the proud who have built religious structures with man's imagination uneasy. They have worked hard. They don't like to disagree—his tempered word tears down concepts. He does not join in

on plans to bring in costly worldly advertisements to evangelize. Instead of giving the wanted rubber stamp to long thought-out initiatives, he asks the uncomfortable question, why?

Some listen. Others are too angry and offended to see the tears behind his words. They talk about him in derogatory terms. " He is not a team player."Some even speak about his destruction in back rooms and secretly hope he fails, of course, all in God's name.

There are leaders, and then there are leaders of leaders. They are usually old and grey. The few I have met, both men and women, are a living marvel of Grace and Wisdom. Their most remarkable quality is humility. They are strong trees that have stood for a long time. Their roots are deep in the Kingdom where the natural eye cannot see. People find refuge in him because they know the bark is covered with many scars, not from his enemies but from the One he loves. It is the price paid for beauty, strength and the Revelation of hidden mystery. But most important, protection from pride. He has stood obediently to be pruned, the cutting off of lesser glory. At times his pain and nakedness were laid bare before all. Few would cover up his weakness. They would never forget them.

Finally: "Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider you blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy." James 5:10-11