

FROM THE 2019 NEW YEARS RETREAT

Leadership

LECTURE 1

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Welcome!

Welcome to the New Year Retreat! It is wonderful to start our New Year with a retreat like this. It's good time to reflect on our life. We can reflect on where we have been, where we are and where we want to go.

This year's topic is: LEADERSHIP



Finding Your Calling

I realized that there are so many books on leadership. But the majority of the books are written on corporate leadership. They are about how to become good leaders in corporate environment. I am not saying that they are not important. We have a lot of things we can learn even though you are not a part of corporate world. But what I am interested in is not just work-related leadership. I am interested in leadership as mother or father, leadership for yourself and your life. I am interested in the leadership as a lifestyle. Leadership affects every aspect of our life. **Leadership is not about what you do but about who you are and who you become.**

I believe that everyone is born with a calling. This calling is not just a job you do but it is deeper than that. It is the life calling. This calling defies who you are. This calling shapes who you become. This calling makes up the substance of your life. It gives you the reason to live. Everyone is born with this calling when they came into this world.

But the thing is, it is hidden deep within us. It is not easily seen and it has to be **discovered**. Only by going through a process and through our intentional effort, we can discover this. It is not just given to you automatically. Job is job but this is more than the job you have. You are more than a doctor. You are

more than a minister. You are more than a teacher. You are more than a businessman or businesswoman. We are who we are by this call.

Let us intentionally find our life calling. It is very much related to a fulfilling life. Leadership is not just about doing well what we do. Leadership is living out our life calling. Silence your scattered and noisy self and pay attention, listen carefully to the inner voice that arises from within. You will be able to hear that voice. It doesn't take a lot of time. It requires, though, **YOUR FOCUSED ATTENTION.** Leadership is to shape your life, following and responding to this life calling. Mother Teresa discovered this calling and devoted her whole life to it. Martin Luther King Jr. also found this calling later in his life and devoted his life to this.



Callings in the Bible

Exodus 2:11-15

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and saw their forced labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting; and he said to the one who was in the wrong, 'Why do you strike your fellow Hebrew?' He answered, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' Then Moses was afraid and thought, 'Surely the thing is known.' When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses.

But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well.

Exodus 3:1-10

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.'



Moses knew his life calling when he was young. And he tried to live out his life calling. But he didn't know **how to live out** his life calling. He got carried away by his strong passion and emotion. He became a murderer. And people he helped, instead of appreciating what he did for them, they tried to put Moses into trouble. **SO, HE RAN AWAY.** He ran away from his calling, and he ignored it for 40 years. He lived well with financial security and peace he made. But God came and touched the calling hidden deep inside of him. This touch is not necessarily a dramatic intervention. It is a small voice.

Elijah experienced this still small voice.

1 Kings 19:11-13

He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

1 Kings 19:15

"Then the Lord said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus;'

A sound of sheer silence. Elijah found new strength, new focus and new direction. That is the leadership. Find new strength, new focus, and new direction. Find why of life and how of life is decided.

Life of leadership is not necessarily an easy way of living. We don't choose the life of leadership because it is easy but because you feel a strong urge that comes from within.

To Moses, going back to Egypt was a very scary place. It was a place he rather not thought about. He wanted to forget about this place. This place didn't exist in his mind. It was a place that reminded him of his painful past. It was a place he didn't want to deal with. That was why he gave all kinds of excuses.

Jeremiah gave the excuse that he was young. And Jonah ran away from his calling.

Tension of Leadership

Reluctance is the reality of the life of leadership. Leaders always live in **TENSION**. There is tension between the joy of responding to the CALL and the fear of living out the CALL.

This tension shapes a leader. Tension between calling and the survival.

Philippians 1:22-24

If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: **my desire is to depart** and be with Christ, for that is far better; but **to remain in the flesh** is more necessary for you.

St. Paul had a desire to depart, run away from his situations. But at the same time, the strong voice of calling pulled him down to remain in the flesh.

Leaders live with this tension and this tension makes you and shapes you as a leader. God is more interested in shaping you than getting the work done. If you are shaped by God, then you will have an inner quality built in within you. With this inner quality, you can overcome even impossible situations. This inner quality you can learn only through suffering. It is hidden in the suffering.



Being Your True Self

Being a leader is not about the position you hold. It is about the kind of person you are becoming. You can wear different hats, but you cannot be different persons.

Leadership is being true to yourself. You cannot be somebody else. Being who you are comes out in everything you do; work, church, home, and in relationships.

Henri Nouwen said in his book, In the Name of Jesus,

When we are securely rooted in personal intimacy with the source of life, it will be possible to remain flexible without being relativistic, convinced without being rigid, willing to confront without being offensive, gentle and forgiving without being soft, and true witnesses without being manipulative.

For Christian leadership to be truly fruitful in the future, a movement from the moral to the mystical is required." (P. 46-47)

He is talking about a person of a leader not the work of a leader. If you are a person of a leader, then whatever you do, your person will come out. Whether you are in a corporate environment, or in your family, or with your friends and colleagues.

If the leaders have baggage that is not yet resolved, then this baggage will affect their leadership. The hurt within you does not remain there. It comes out and hurts others.

If leaders have an anger problem, their anger will hurt others. But on the other hand, if leaders' heart is closed because of fear or hurt, they may become

insensitive and cold leaders who don't understand and empathize with people's hurt and pain. If leaders are selfish and self-centred, they will use their leadership position merely to promote themselves. People they lead may become only tools for their own agenda. What is the most important is themselves, their agenda, and what they think. It is very dangerous when narcissists become leaders.

Listening

There are people you talk to and feel that you are understood. They don't say much but you feel understood. They have the excellent leadership gift.

So, leaders have to first learn to listen. Listen to not just the words they say but to what they may go through. We are not good at listening. We are good at telling them what to do. But we don't listen, and we don't understand. That's why we say and do without understanding what's going on.

Jesus often went away to be alone. He was alone to listen. Don't think of prayer as an activity you do or expression of your piety. Jesus prayed to listen. He wanted to listen to what is going on. He wanted to listen to his inner voice. He wanted to listen to God.





The Importance of Discernment

From listening comes **DISCERNMENT**. Discernment is one of the most important quality leaders should have. Discernment is not having general knowledge. Discernment is not understanding a theory. Discernment is not just experiential knowledge either.

Discernment comes from your whole self. Your integrity, your faith, your knowledge, your experience, your value, and your philosophy. Discernment is knowing exactly what's going on. Jesus had a tremendous power of discernment. He was not easily fooled. He criticized people who looked good on the surface. But he uplifted people who were marginalized and alienated. His discernment did not follow the norm automatically.

When you say and do things without discernment, you can make the situation worse. But not speaking and not doing anything at all is not necessarily helping the situation either. No message is also a message. When you should have said something, but because you didn't say anything, you can hurt somebody.

What is important is **DISCERNMENT**.

Our situation may require us to do different actions. Our situation may require us to stand up for justice. Our situation may require us to forgive and accept. Our situation may require us to rebuke. Our situation may require us to encourage rather than rebuke. Our situation may require us to fight risking division. Our situations may require us to seek peace and unity. Discernment is the ability to read our situation.

Jesus always waited for the time. Often, he said, my time has not yet come. Because he had discernment.

Discernment is hard.

Jesus went away alone whenever he had to make an important decision. He went out to be alone when he was choosing his 12 disciples.

Luke 6:12-16

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Don't just follow your impulse. Don't just follow your common sense. Don't just follow your feelings. Overcome your prejudices. Seek God's will. Spend a lot of time listening.

Discussion

Questions

1. What are the differences and similarities between corporate leadership and spiritual leadership?
2. What does the life calling look like? How do we find the life calling? How important is it in leadership?
3. Leaders are shaped by the tension between the joy of finding the life calling and the fear of carrying it out. What are your thoughts on this?
4. How important is the discernment in the leadership and how do you cultivate the discernment?